PAX REDUX,

OR THE

Christian Reconciler.

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In Three Parts.

Being A Project for Re-uniting all Christians into one sole

COMMUNION.

Ἔχετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἅλας καὶ εἰρηνεύετε ἐν ἀλλήλοις.
Mark Chap. 9. Vers. 50.

Done out of French into English, by Philip Ayres *Esq;*

Published by Authority.

London, Printed, and Sold, by *Andrew Sowle*, at the *Three Keys* in *Nags-Head-Court*, in *Grace-Church-Street*, over-against the *Conduit*, 1688.

THE TRANSLATOR TO THE READER.

MY Author has here undertaken a great and generous Design, which is to offer a Project for Re-eſtabliſhing the Chriſtian Religion in its ancient Simplicity and Purity, wherein it appeared in the Primitive Times; Likewiſe for eaſing Chriſtians of the heavy Burdens they have groaned under, by humane and unneceſſary Conſtitutions, ſince then impoſed on us; For freeing us alſo from the Miſeries and Calamities we ſuffer by reaſon of the many Diviſions amongſt us, and for reſtoring us to that Liberty in Religion which Chriſt and his Apoſtles left us, whereby all Chriſtians might be reduced to an unity in Communion.

He aſſerts that the Fundamentals of Chriſtian Religion are not very many, being comprehended and clearly expreſſed in the Holy Scriptures; for it would be a great Preſumption, to queſtion whether or no thoſe Rules and Doctrines were ſufficient for the attainment of our Salvation, which are there propoſed as the neceſſary Duties of a Chriſtian, by our Bleſſed

Saviour Christ himself. And I cannot think, but that if these plain Fundamentals, which are universally owned and acknowledged by all that profess Christianity, were rightly distinguished we should find they contained so great Truths, as if religiously observed, would be sufficient to bring us to everlasting Life.

When the Apostles declare they have revealed to the Church the whole Counsel of God (both in the Credenda *and* Agenda*) that was requisit to Salvation; What Credit can we give to those who impose new and unnecessary Matters on our Faith and Worship? May not such Persons be justly accounted the Authors and Promoters of our Divisions? The Apostles Creed having been always acknowledged to contain a Summary of the Fundamental Articles of our Faith, and been approved, ever since their times, by all Christians; as many as sincerely believe it, and all the evident Consequences thereof; if they also believe the Holy Scriptures, from whence that has its Original, they cannot be said to be in any Error of simple Belief, offensive to God, nor out of the hopes of Salvation; How then can any pretending to be Christians, justifie the Persecuting of their Brethren, who are known by the same Denomination, and the treating them as Hereticks and Reprobates, only for not complying with them in things not necessary to be believed as Articles of Faith? For I must esteem as such, all those which have not the express Word of God for their Warrant, clearly and plainly laid open to vulgar Capacities; and know not how any New Article, which was not such in the Apostles time can be made so now.* Id verius, *saith Tertullian*, quod prius, id prius quod ab initio, id ab initio quod ab Apostolis. That is truest which was first, That first which was from the Beginning, That from the Beginning, which was from the Apostles. *Those diligent Publishers of the Divine Oracles, did*

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in Things of Indifferency, which were not of absolute concern to Salvation, leave us to our Liberty, requiring only a mutual Forbearance and Condescension towards each other in them: They took not upon them to find any Defects in the Methods which their Great Master had deliver'd to them. What shall we say then of those who have Ordained other Laws and Practices, with a Damnabitur *on every one who observes them not? Can this be thought less than a Presumptious Undertaking to supply the Rules which God in his Sacred Word gave us, as if his Divine Wisdom had left them to us imperfect? Now if we can thus blame the unreasonableness of such as would force us to go by Rules, neither prescribed in the Scriptures, nor ever practised by, or known to the Primitive Church, for the first Four Centuries, we then in like manner ought to be tender how we deal so with others.*

And since it is the Duty of every good Christian to promote, as much as in him lies, the Peace and Unity of the Church: It would be happy, if those who dissent from the Publick Worship of the Nation wherein they dwell, would comply in matters indifferent, as far as they can, without offering Violence to their own Consciences, and that those who have a Power over them, would also condescend somewhat on their parts, since there might perchance be as good Reasons given for the Compliance of the one, as of the other. And in order to this happy Union of Christians, great care is to be had, not to load the Publick Forms of Devotion with any of those Private Fancies upon which either Party differs, for that will be to render these Divisions incurable to the Worlds End.

The Constitutions of Christs Church are disposed as much as may be, for bringing within its Pale all true Christians, and those who would confine it to narrower Bounds, by hindering the encrease of its Members, and excluding them for slight

and unneceſſary Cauſes, do eclips its Glory, and leſſen its Grandure; which is altogether contrary to the Practice of the Primitive Chriſtians, who made no ſcruple of admitting into their Communion, all who profeſſed not ſome deadly Hereſie, or were not guilty of Idolatry, knowing themſelves obliged to bear with the Infirmities of the Weak: Now if this Chriſtian Virtue of Charity be abſolutely neceſſary to Salvation, as no Man can deny, Ought we not to embrace thoſe as our Brethren who differ from us in ſome Externals only? For a certain thoſe Churches or Communions, can pretend to very little Charity, who not only thruſt out from among them, as not fit to be accounted Fellow Members with them, but alſo violently Perſecute, as utter Enemies to Chriſt, all who refuſe to conform to their Methods, tho the Difference be but about ſome Trivial Ceremonies, or Things which will admit of Diſpute. Whereas none can be truly reputed to be Separate from the Church of God, but ſuch as ſeparate themſelves from their juſt Duty to God, ceaſe to be Good, and throw themſelves into a ſtate of Damnation.

And tho it muſt be acknowledged, that Ceremonies have a conſiderable Influence on the practical part of Religion, ſince they raiſe in the Minds of Men, a due ſence of Reſpect and Reverence towards God in our Devotions; yet they being encreaſed to ſo great a Number, without regard to the Apoſtles Rule of Decency *and* Order; *Why ſhould we not diſtinguiſh amongſt them, and retain only thoſe which are of Help to us in the performance of our Duty to God, reject all ſuch as any ways obſtruct it, and eſteem thoſe as indifferent, which contribute neither to the One, nor to the Other; Having always a regard to the Circumſtances of Perſons, Times and Places, which may perchance require various Methods herein: And there muſt alſo be a Charitable Bearing one with another, as*

well

well in reſpect of thoſe Ceremonies ſo retained, as in thoſe rejected, or held indifferent.

St Auguſtine *complained of this in his time*, Hoc nimis doleo, *ſays he*, quia multa quæ in Divinis Libris Saluberrima præcepta ſunt nimis curantur, et tam multis Præſumptionibus plena ſunt omnia. I am very much troubled that ſo many Things, wholſomly commanded in the Holy Scriptures, are ſo little regarded, and that all Things are ſo full of Preſumptions,. *Auguſt. Epiſt.* 119. *And in the ſame Epiſtle ſays again*, Quamvis contra Fidem not ſint, tamen ipſam Religionem, *&c.* Altho theſe Things be not againſt the Faith, yet they ſo much oppreſs our very Religion with ſervile Burdens, which God of his infinite Mercy would have to be Free, under very few and plain Sacraments of Divine Service, that the State of the *Jews* is much more tolerable than the State of the Church of Chriſt; For the *Jews* tho they were Strangers to Chriſtian Liberty, yet were they ſubject only to the ſevere Burdens of the Law of God, not to the Devices and Preſumptions of Men. *I wiſh we could herein follow the Practice of the firſt Chriſtians, who tho they differed in ſome of their Rites and Ceremonies, yet whilſt they owned the ſame Faith, they joyned ſtill in the ſame Communion, looking on theſe Things but as Externals, or ſimple Ornaments which had nothing in them of the Eſſential Parts of Religion.*

If this were well conſidered, it might in ſome meaſure abate the Heats of thoſe fierce Champions, who are ſo Zealous in defence of that particular Church or Sect, whereof they profeſs themſelves Members, and ſo much exaſperated againſt all others of Different Sentiments, that they could be contented to deſtroy them. Odia Religionum ſunt acerrima. *Theſe Men would have the Rules of their Faith and Worſhip to be the Standard to all other Chriſtians. So* Procruſtes *the* Athenian

Athenian Robber *measured on his Bed those he got into his Power, and as many as he found not of his own Demension he cut off shorter, or extended them on Wracks till he made them of the just size.*

Most of our Presses are now employed on Books of Controversies in Religion, of which many are so fiercely penn'd, that they rather seem Defiances to Combate, then sober Arguments to convince Men of their Errors, and bring them to be of their Faith. Such Polemick Writers conceive the overflowings of their Gall, to be the only demonstrations of their Zeal; and that the irregular Heats which waste the Vital Spirits of Religion, are the most soveraign Cordials to support them. *And tho we ought* not to blame those who earnestly contend for the Faith of the Gospel, which was once delivered unto the Saints: *Yet sure the Apostles meaning could never be to encourage this Contest by Menances, by reproachful Language, and by scandalous Reflections. The Itch of Disputation has now so universaly tainted us, that a Man can scarce go into any Society, be it even into the* Taverns *or* Coffee-Houses, *but he shall be entertained with a* Convivium Religiosum. *This has raised such a Ferment in the Nation, that it seems as if the old Factions of the* Guelfs *and* Gibellines *were revived and got over amongst us; when if the Subjects of many of these Disputes, which they pursue with so much Violence and Passion, were carefully examined, they might possibly appear to be about some strange Notions or Speculations in Divinity, where Men vainly undertake to explain or define what is Incomprehensible, or else concerning Matters indifferent, which might be left to be understood one way or the other, without prejudicing our Salvation.*

'Tis an amazing thing to think, that any Sect of Men should act so contrary to the Rules of their Profession. Let us

look

look back on the many Wars and Perſecutions made by ſome Chriſtians againſt others; Let us conſider the Inquiſition, and divers other Severities practiſed by our Neighbour Nations on account of Religion, and I am ſorry we are able to produce ſo many Inſtances of Cruelty, not very far ſhort of thoſe, even here amongſt our ſelves; with all which ſhould any ſober Heathen *be made acquainted, were it poſſible for him to imagine that we owned a Goſpel of Peace: O that thoſe who perſiſted in doing theſe Outrages they are unwilling to Suffer, ſhould profeſs Obedience to that Chriſtian Law of* **Love thy Neighbour as thy Self.**

Do not the greateſt part of our Quarrels ariſe from Things hard to be underſtood, and which will admit of ambiguous Sences and Interpretations? Should we not then be very cautious of putting too great ſtreſs on ſuch nice Points of our Religion, leſt by ſo doing we weaken the Nerves of the moſt ſubſtantial Ones? Certainly if theſe Methods, by which we are to be guided to our Everlaſting Happineſs, and which we are commanded to ſearch for in the Holy Scriptures, were ſo intricate, and their true meaning ſo difficult to be found out, as certain Criticks would make us believe; I cannot imagine they would have been propoſed to all Men in general; for methinks it would be very ſevere, that any abſtruſe Notions which cannot be comprehended by the meaneſt Capacities ſhould be enjoyned us, as abſolutely neceſſary to be believed, ſince that would be to expoſe the Poor Unlearned and Ignorant ſort of People to inevitable peril of Damnation, who have equal right to the Merits of our Bleſſed Lord and Saviours Death and Paſſion, with the Greateſt Men, and moſt Profound Doctors. I ſhall conclude with this hearty wiſh, That we could not only Conform in the Rules of our Faith, but come up alſo in the Practiſe of our Lives to the Old Church of Chriſt, of his Apoſtles, and of the Primitive Biſhops and Fathers, which Church we know was Sound and Perfect, and as

Tertullian's

Tertullian's *expreſſion is*, a Pure Virgin, as then ſpotted with no Idolatry, nor with any foul or ſhameful Fault.

I have only this further to acquaint the Reader, *that about fifteen Years ago I Publiſhed this* Treatiſe, *which I had Tranſlated out of* French; *and ſuppoſing that at this time, it might appear not unſeaſonable abroad again, I have with ſome ſmall Alterations made it more ſuitable to the preſent Conjuncture, and ſuffered it to be Reprinted; wiſhing it may have thoſe good Effects which the Pious and Learned Author ſo earneſtly deſired.*

Lectori

Lectori S.

ET nunc miror maxime, & usque antehac miratus sum, eo plerosque Christianos esse ingenio, ut inter se concordiam colere non possint: quod mihi immonstri loco esse videtur. Cum enim eam religionem sectentur, qua nihil unquam fuit, nec unquam erit, aut sanctius, aut simplicius, aut ad humanitatem accommodatum magis, illi tamen inter se ita vivunt, ut Tigres, Ursos, Pantheras, Leonesque, ac rabiosos Canes in unam caveam conclusos dicas. Hincque adeo factum est, ut jamdiu mihi sit persuasissimum, qui ita sunt, eos nihil minus esse quam Christianos, etiamsi tales se haberi postulent. Neque enim internecinis odiis, turpissimis opprobriis, ac atrocissimis calumniis, ferro denique, ac flammis, ut fit, alii adversus alios grassarentur, & amorem Dei, ac proximi charitatem violarent: queis sublatis nihil aliud fuerit Christianismus quam nomen inane, & vana aliqua species, quæ Contemplantis otium oblectet. Id apud me cum nuper, ut sæpe alias, non sine gravissima indignatione dolerem, optato allatus est hic libellus sine omni Scriptoris nomine, in quo tantam utilitatem reperi, ut, si quod tam diuturno ac pene immedicabili malo adhiberi remedium possit, id illius ope eventurum esse arbitrer. Eum certe ita probavi, ut repentino mentis instinctu percussus, meum de illo judicium his versibus inclusserim, non sine votis, ut te, Lector, Christianum esse bona fide ostendas. Et fiet, spero, ubi Scriptoris mentem & consilium pernoveris.

Descende summis,
Pax alma, polis,
Celeresque per æthera purum
Extende pennas,
Frondenti nitidum caput
Impediens olivâ.
Jam satis, O nimium satis,
Te juga Olympi,
Et longa exilia,
Et diræ scelerum facies, ac tristia bella
Adversam tenuere.
Aude itaquo oblitas nunc, Diva, revisere terras,
Christiadumque genus genus irritable, placa.
Concordes illis mittens per pectora sensus.
Læta redi, Virgo, tecum una Astræa redibit,
Molliaque inter se traducent otia gentes,
Dissidiis odiisque procul. Te turba Acherontis,
Te Bellona tremet venientem, & magnus eadem
Sub te, sacra canens, Orbis venerabitur aras.
Eia age, jam cernes divolsa abreptaque membra,
Et corpus lacerum in sedes rediisse priores:
Denique jam Christo redivivum reddere Christum,
Et secura potes: Nam lato limite, fertur
Hic liber, aversosque animos tibi, Sancta, reducit,
Per populos jam jura dabis; Te quisque canemus,
Et tua tam densis stabunt altaria donis,
Ut te relicti teneant oblivia Cœli,
Et dubites posthac, cum secula læta videbis,
Sideribus Terræ præstent, an sidera Terris.

THE

The Authors PREFACE.

IF it be a great cauſe of Grief to all true Chriſtians, to ſee the Sacred Religion, which the Son of God brought down from Heaven to Earth, miſerably torn in pieces by ſo many different Sects, which heretofore have, and who ſtill divide it at this preſent: If all theſe ſeveral *Confeſſions of Faith*, which diſmember the Spouſe of Jeſus Chriſt, do extraordinarily afflict all Pious Souls; ſurely they ſhould conceive no leſs Grief at this thing, that hitherto there has never been any one, who undertook to apply a Healing Remedy to theſe Wounds, that has attmpted, with Succeſs, the Cure of ſo great a Miſchief. It ſeems no more now to be thought on, but as an Evil to be deplored, and abſolutely incurable. Every one imagins himſelf ſtrictly bound to adhere to his Old Principles and preconceived Opinions: Every one Flatters himſelf in his own thoughts, and believes, that he poſſeſſes the Truth, and is in the Right Way; after which he looks no more on others, but with ſome kind of Averſion, or, at leaſt, with Pity; They, in the judgment of Him and his Party, are as ſo many Unfortunate Creatures, ready to tumble down an unavoidable Precipice; They are conſidered as People that are only fit to be the ſubject of the Prayers

which are offer'd up for Miſerable Wretches, or of the Complaints which are made to lament their unhappy Condition. Neither are thoſe looked upon who would undertake to remedy this Evil, but as Idle Projectors and Fantaſtical Perſons, like Mountebanks, who promiſe the Cure of thoſe Diſeaſes that are given over by the moſt skilful Phyſicians.

I know very well, that many have ſtudied to find out a Means of According ſome of theſe Sects, by Re-uniting certain Perſons together, who have been engag'd in them, and who, on this account, have reciprocally entertained moſt implacable Feuds againſt each other. There have been divers Writings publiſhed for endeavouring an Accommodation between the *Catholicks* and *Proteſtants*: They have attempted to Reconcile thoſe of the Confeſſion of *Ausburh*, vulgarly ſtiled *Lutherans*, with ſuch as are called *Calviniſts*; but there have commonly been other Intereſts than thoſe of the Glory of God, intermixed in theſe Undertakings. It has rather been by a Principle of Policy, than any Motive of Conſcience, and deſire of the Salvation of Souls, that theſe Deſigns have been ſet on foot; whence it has happened, that God has turned his Bleſſing from them, and made the Succeſs not to anſwer the Greatneſs of the Deſign.

Some likewiſe, not aiming at any thing herein more than how they might make an eaſier Paſſage, and more plauſible Revolt, from One Communion to Another, have only ſtudied to weaken the Foundation of their former Opinions, and ſtrengthen that of their New ones, which they have an intention to Embrace. There is alſo this in it, that Men do not ordinarily attempt, but to remedy ſome Effects, without aſcending up to the principal Cauſe and

and only Source of all this Evil; not unlike thoſe Ignorant Phyſicians who unskilfully labour to cure ſome of the Symptoms of a Diſeaſe, without applying any thing to the grand Original Cauſe, on the curing whereof depend all its Conſequences.

There was a Preface of a Book, Printed ſome Years ſince, in the Low Countries, which touched this Matter, and ſeemed to aim at a General Reconciliation of all Chriſtians, by means of a Charitable Allowance, and a Mutual Toleration. But beſides that it was but by the by, that the Author treated upon this Important Subject: It ſeems that, not having aſcended up to the Original of all theſe Diviſions, he has not contrived any proper Way for the Reconciliation which he propoſes, nor has rightly diſtinguiſhed between what is Fundamental in Chriſtian Religion and what is not, to let us ſee, laſt of all, in what things we ſhould have this Charity one towards another. And we reject alſo the Means which is moſt important towards the attaining to ſo good an end, whilſt we refuſe to diſingage our ſelves from whatſoever may render it Unfruitful, as I ſhall ſhew you in its proper Place.

It was in ſearch of This, that I have, for ſome Years paſt, applied my ſelf to ſo diligent and ſerious Meditation. I utterly caſt off, at the inſtant, all Former Opinions of my own, and Prejudices againſt others, which might be any Obſtacle to me in ſo laudable a Deſign: I diſingaged my ſelf for a time from all things whatſoever, of any Communion of Chriſtians which was Singular, and which ſeparated it ſelf from others: And I believed, that in examining carefully the things wherein they All agree, I might diſcern with a more diſintereſted Eye, that which would be for the Common Good. I then conſidered with all

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the exactneſs I was able, the Nature, Greatneſs, and lamentable Effects of this miſerable Diviſion of Chriſtians. I obſerved at the ſame time, how Ineſtimable would all thoſe Goods, and all thoſe Advantages be, which would ariſe from their Re-uniting into one and the ſame *Confeſſion of Faith*, and the Reconciliation of their Minds into the ſame Communion. After that, I diligently conſidered with an intire Applying my Mind, what could be the Cauſes of ſo deplorable a Misfortune: I have aſcended the beſt I could to the very Fountain Head of this Evil, where, I ſuppoſe, I have made ſome Diſcoveries, which, without queſtion, will be reliſhed by thoſe who ſhall look upon them without a Worldly Intereſt.

In ſhort, I am verily perſwaded, that after all my Endeavours, my continual Prayers have been heard by the Goodneſs and Bounty of the God of Peace: I hope, that through the Bleſſing of Heaven, I have met with the True and Only Remedy of this Evil, that is to ſay, the ſole Means of Reconciling together all thoſe who make Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and who are perſwaded, that the Doctrine of the Goſpel, which is compriſed in the Scriptures of the New Teſtament, is delivered to us from God, and that it contains what we ſhould Know, Believe and Do for our Salvation. So that as ſoon as we ſhall religiouſly Re-unite, in thoſe matters which It preſcribes us, we ſhall be in a ready way of attaining to the Mark which It propoſes. At leaſt, I may, with Truth, ſay, that ſince that very time, I found, for my Own part, a great Calmneſs of Spirit. I have not any more, ſince then, looked upon Chriſtian Doctrine, to be Difficult, Knotty, charged and encumbred with an infinite number of Subtil Queſtions, Critical and Unprofitable Notions. Theſe

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are the very Things that have made it pass Unknown, having utterly Disfigured its Natural Beauty: This is it that has given it a Face altogether New and Strange; and that if Saint *Paul* and the rest of the Apostles should descend, this very day, upon Earth, they would not know this Doctrine, so Disguised as it is. And this is the main Thing that has created these miserable Divisions among Christians.

I must confess, that, for a great while, I had a design not to publish my Thoughts upon this Subject: I would have concealed the Advantage, that I had met with, and made it of particular use to My self; Which was not for any Envy that I bare to the Publick Good, for which I could be glad to apply all my Power and Life: But I distrusted my Own Abilities, and knowing, as I do, their utmost, I have ever been suspicious of their Productions.

Besides this, I never approved of that Liberty which is taken of exposing all our Thoughts to publick View, or to say more properly, all those Whimsies which we conceive in our Studies. This is to do a great prejudice to Men of Learning, to steal from them the Time which is so dear to them. 'Tis staying them to pick out Good from bad Writings, that is, to search for some Grains of Gold amongst Heaps of Sand. It is to busie the Press about Fruitless Works, which ought not to be employed but in the most Excellent: It is, lastly, to entertain the Ignorance of the Vulgar, who are not able to make distinction of Books, and who, many times, being drawn by a Specious Title, are afterwards observed to be more deeply engaged in Ignorance and Error.

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Moreover, I know that the Opinions of the Publick are very ſlightly to be regarded, for People ordinarily paſs their Cenſures upon other Mens Works, according to the ſway of their own Paſſions. Whence it comes to paſs, that Perverſe Judgments are made on the moſt Innocent Deſigns. I fancied, that ſome would be ſaying of me, I was but in Jeſt and Trifling; that others would imagine, I acted herein by ſome of thoſe Motives which I had already obſerved and condemned; and that many alſo of thoſe who did not abſolutely diſapprove of my Thoughts, might ſay, This indeed is a Thing rather to be deſired than hoped for, and that therefore all theſe attempts would be without Succeſs. Neither am I ignorant how Curious this Age is; That now a days much Seaſoning is required to the Choieſt Meats, and that if the moſt Excellent Subjects be not accompanied with a Studious and Elegant Stile, they diſcourage the Readers, and are thrown aſide as Merchandiſe not worth looking on: And it will be a hard matter for me, at above Sixty Years of Age, to contrive a Stile that ſhall carry with it ſuch an Air and Neatneſs, as ſhall pleaſe the Refined Wits of our Times.

But after all, I thought that I ought not to quit a Deſign ſo profitable and ſo important to the Publick Good, for ſome Objections of ſmall Conſequence; that the Matter ought more to be eſteemed than the Form. I conſidered that Diamonds ſhould not be thrown away becauſe they are Rough; and that the Golden Oar has always its Value, although it hath not yet attained to the Luſter which the Cruſible gives it, when its pure Body ſhall be ſeparated from the Droſs and Earth which obſcure it. The leaſt Articulate and Weakeſt Voices are kindly heard, when employed

employed to adviſe us of our Good, and to conduct us out of ſome Unſafe Courſe. And perchance it may ſo happen, that ſome or other of the Learned Men of this Age, excited by my weak Endeavours may worthily accompliſh what I have but rudely eſſayed; and thus it often happens, that the unskilful Play of ſome indifferent Muſitian ſtirs up thoſe who have a more delicate Touch, to correct the Defects of what they hear by the excellency of their Hands and Skill.

All theſe Conſiderations, after ſundry Debates, did induce me to upbraid my ſelf in termes not much unlike the poor Leppers of *Samaria*, 2 *Kings*, *chap.* 7. Theſe Wretches having met with great Treaſure, and a quantity of Proviſions in the Camp, which the *Syrians* had left behind them, blamed themſelves for keeping in their Poſſeſſion a Good which might relieve all the Inhabitants of their City. I have therefore, at laſt, taken my Pen in hand to communicate to the Publick, the Fruit of a Meditation, to which I have applied my ſelf for a long time.

I have endeavoured in this Little Work to follow a Familiar Method accommodated to the Humors of all ſorts of People; wherein my principle Aim is to make all Chriſtians, even the moſt Weak and Ignorant, comprehend the Nature of that Religion which they profeſs, by bringing it back to its Firſt Principles and Fundamental Doctrines: But to attain to this End, it muſt be repreſented in its Naked Dreſs, by clearing it from whatſoever may render it Obſcure, Ridiculous and Barbarous.

I ſtrive to make my ſelf underſtood by all the World, and to proportion my Thoughts and Expreſſions to the Capacity of every one. To which effect I have divided

this ſmall Treatiſe into Three Principal Parts: In the Firſt I ſhall let you ſee the Nature, the Extent, and ſad Conſequences of this lamentable Diviſion, which is among Chriſtians; The Greatneſs of the Evil ſhould make us know how urgent and preſſing is the Neceſſity of its Remedy. The Second will diſcover the Cauſes of the Evil, by laying them open even to their very Source Head. And laſtly, the Third will ſet forth the Soveraign and Infallible Remedy which may be employed for the Curing and Healing this grievous Wound.

If I perceive this Work to be ſeriouſly entertained,& that it ſhall produce any Good Fruit,I will bleſs God for it with all my Heart, ſince it is only his Glory that I propoſe for the ſole Object of my Deſign. And I will further beſeech him to beſtow on me ſo much Health and Strength, that I may be able to make this Treatiſe be followed by Two Others, which may be of no leſs Importance: One of them ſhall be concerning the Counſels which Chriſtian Princes and States may take to make this Enterpriſe ſucceed aright, by preſerving their true and lawful Intereſts, and thoſe of private Perſons. The other ſhall be to diſpoſe all thoſe who are out of the Pale of Chriſtianity, utterly to caſt away from them all thoſe Prejudices which blindly retain them in their Antient Religions, and hinder them from ſeeing the Advantages of that which the Eternal Son of God has given us; ſo that they ſhall ſee how even Nature and Reaſon, do powerfully invite them to ſubmit to the Goſpel, by a perfect Obedience; and how that is the only Meanes to enjoy a real Tranquility of Mind and a ſolid Quiet of Conſcience. This will ſufficiently ſerve to excite Chriſtians (after their Re-union ſhall be procured) to contribute, on their parts, towards the Salvation of all the

the Inhabitants of the World, with whom they ſhall entertain any Commerce,

And as there is nothing ſo repugnant to the Deſign, I have in hand, as the Prejudices wherewith it may be lookt upon; for they are theſe Prejudices which have ſo much fomented and ſtrengthened this Diviſion, and which would alſo be capable to deſtroy the Fruit that might be hoped for from this Project: So I have, on this occaſion, endeavoured as much as in me lay, not to give the leaſt Hint that ſhould ſeem to favour any Prejudice whatſoever. I have avoided, as a Dangerous Rock, giving the leaſt ſuſpicion that I am Intereſted for any Party, and content my ſelf without taxing any One in particular, to blame in general whatſoever hath cauſed theſe Diviſions, and whatſoever entertains them at preſent.

'Tis for this reaſon, I have not been ſpurred on to this Deſign by any Motive of Vanity, as to acquire the Honour of having undertaken an Enterpriſe which never any man propoſed before; and likewiſe to take away all Diſtruſts which my Profeſſion or my Condition might give: For I know well enough, that if the *Proteſtants* did belive this Project had been contrived by a *Catholick*, and eſpecially by a Clergy-Man of that Religion, they would think partially on it, and that he was engaged by Intereſt to favour thoſe of his Communion: And on the contrary, if the *Catholicks* were perſwaded it was the Work of a *Proteſtant*, or of a *Greek*, they would immediately reject it. And without doubt, the Averſion they have to thoſe whom they pretend are out of the Church, would make them refuſe the moſt ſaving Remedies, becauſe it would be preſented them by a Suſpected Hand: It is juſt as a Sick Perſon takes not, but with great fear, any Medicine which is preſcribed him

by a Phyſitian whom he miſtruſts. The ſame may be ſaid of all other Communions, which are found among Chriſtians, for they look upon one another with ſo much Jealouſie and Suſpition, that only the very Thought that ſo laudable a Deſign had been laid by a Perſon not of their Communion, would be ſufficient to make them reject it without further Examination.

But to draw to a Concluſion; I doubt not but that ſome Perſons when they conſider the Nature of the Remedy which I propoſe for the Cure of this Evil, ſhall eſteem it as a thing Eaſie to be Conceived; that they will ſay, This Idea was no more than what any Man might have thought on: That it is a Project which, at the firſt, is very Specious, and finds no great Difficulties at a ſlight Conſideration of it, but will meet with ſuch as are Unconquerable, if any one undertake to ſet it on Foot. But beſides the great Advantage it is, to have a Means of fancying ſuch an Idea as is accompanied by that of Peace and Concord, the only Names of which are capable of raiſing an exceſs of Joy in the Hearts of all Men; I hope ſo to unmask this Deſign, and diſcover ſuch a Face, that all ſhall underſtand the Foundation, the Poſſibility and great Advantage thereof. For I pretend not to put an End to this Great Work without anſwering to the Principal Objections which may be made againſt it. And I promiſe (as I have ſaid before) another Treatiſe, wherein, in caſe This ſhall be favourably received, I will propoſe a Means how to make this Project ſucceed: I ſhall let you ſee how the Power and Authority of thoſe muſt be employed, who are in a capacity of working ſucceſsfully in it. And I beſeech God to ſend down his Bleſſing hereupon, and guide all to his Glory, to the Good of his Church, and to the Comfort of all thoſe good Souls, who ſhall ſigh after ſo Holy a Re-union.

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PAX REDUX,

OR THE

Christian Reconciler.

The First Part.

Of the Division which is among Christians, and of its Consequences.

CHAP. I.

Of the Nature and Greatness of this Division.

WHen St *Paul* said, *That it was necessary there should be Heresies amongst us, to the end that such as are approved might be made manifest.* His Words must not be taken, as if he would by an extravagant Paradox, Authorize the diversity of Opinions in Christianity. For his design was never to favour the Authors of Sects, and Heads of Parties, by imposing Silence on those who would Remedy Divisions, and put a stop to their sad Consequences. But he declares plainly, what we must expect from the ill Disposition of the Spirits of Men, by reason of the high esteem they have of their own Sufficiency, and of their inclination to render themselves Considerable, by some singular Opinions in matters of Religion. He designs by the same means to make us see how the Providence of God, which draws Good out of Evil, and Light out of the thickest Darkness, takes occasion from thence, to distinguish such as appertain to him; making appear by this contradiction of Sinners, the constancy of the Servants of God, and their generous resistance to all sorts of Temptations and

Tryals. It is in this ſence alſo, that *Jeſus Chriſt* declares to us the neceſſity of Scandals and Tribulations ariſing in the Church, and that he is come to kindle the Fire-brand of War in the World, and to put Diviſions in States and Families; for otherwiſe the Goſpel, which is the Miniſtry of Grace, and a Word of Reconciliation and Peace, does not of it ſelf propoſe any thing but Union, Amity and Concord. Nature, although ſprung from the ſame Original as Grace, hath inclinations quite diſtinct: It is not pleaſed, but in Diverſity, and ſeems not to ſubſiſt but by the Contrariety of Qualities, which occur in its Works; whereas Grace is not preſerved, but by the entire Correſpondence of thoſe who have a ſhare therein, and by the Conformity of their Opinions. We cannot divide our ſelves in its Principles without deſtroying it to us. For this Separation is to give it ſuch grievous Wounds, as will force it to retire from thoſe who are not more careful to improve it, by ſuch ways as are moſt ſuitable to its Nature.

Now, is it not a moſt deplorable thing, that an occaſion ſhould be taken, of making uſe of a Doctrine of Peace, for the miſerable tearing in pieces a Body, whoſe Members ought to be perfectly united? Is it not a ſhameful thing that this unhappy *Pro* and *Con* ſhould be introduced to make the ſame havock in the Church, it ordinarily makes in the World? Philoſophy never ſaw ſo many Sects: *Paganiſm* ſo many different Devotions: *Mahometiſm* ſo many contradictory Opinions concerning their *Alcoran*, as we have Sects, Hereſies and Schiſms in Chriſtianity, about the underſtanding of its fundamental Law, which is the Goſpel. As ſoon as the Sprouts of this Holy Seed began to appear upon the face of the Earth, we ſaw at the ſame time an infinite number of unprofitable and choaking Tares ſpring up, ſufficient to deſtroy that in its birth, which would bring with it Salvation and Life. Almoſt in the ſight of the Holy Apoſtles, (thoſe Sacred Confidents of our Soveraign Maſter) there aroſe ſuch as vaunting themſelves to have embraced his Doctrine, would have repreſented him after their fancies, and ſet him forth as their own whimſies and capricioes ſuggeſted to them. And preſently afterwards would make their particular Sentiments paſs for general and infallible Rules, and have pretended that all others were obliged to ſubmit themſelves thereunto. Thus the Blood of *Jeſus Chriſt*, which ſtill reeking, ſhould warm the Hearts of Chriſtians with a Holy Charity, as well as with an Ardent Zeal, could not deſtroy the Seeds of theſe miſerable Diviſions: Inſomuch that in the Third Age, St *Epiphanius* numbers up Fourſcore ſeveral Hereſies, (or rather different Opinions) which had crept in amongſt the Chriſtians, and yet not mentioning

mentioning the divers Branches into which these Heresies were subdivided. There is scarce any one Article of Faith, or any Speculation of Christianity, whereon strange Opinions have not been advanced, which in time have made Sects, and different Religions. And we know that every particular Combination has appropriated to it self the Name of a Church, and boasted to be the Spouse of the Son of God, to the utter Exclusion of all others. They have also gone further, for besides the Heavenly Doctrine contained in the Gospel, where they have taken occasion of raising Disputes: They have forged such as have been meerly humane, concerning which there have been also miserable Divisions. And as though these Men had climbed up to Heaven to consult the very Mouth of God himself, they have preached up their Doctines as Oracles, and Fundamental Truths. After which they have had no great trouble to engage their Followers to suffer the most cruel Torments and even Death it self in defence of their Opinions, and then have confidently enrolled them in their own Legend, as Martyrs of Jesus Christ, though they Suffered only to advance the Glory and Reputation of some Arch-Heretick. So God, to chastize the Rashness, and confound the Vanity of their thoughts, has permitted, that Division should ruin their Work, as heretofore it defeated the Insolent Designs of those who would erect the Tower of *Babel*.

After we have once forsaken the Royal Road which God has prescribed us, we run into all By-paths, and separate our selves one from another, each of us fancying to be in the most commodious and safest Way. Can you likewise believe, that a Separation is sometimes made about Subjects, not only light and trivial, but in some sort ridiculous, and which do redound to the Shame of those who made them serviceable to the Ends of their Schisms and Divisions? What Contentions have there not been among Christians, namely, On what Day the Celebration of *Easter* should be observed; If, in the Communion, Bread Leavened or Unleavened should be made use of; If the Body of Jesus Christ were Corruptible after its Conception, or not; If we may say, that One of the Trinity was Crucified; If the Church can Condemn and Excommunicate one that is Dead; If the Hallelujah might be Sung in *Lent*, and other Questions of the like Nature? Behold here what are ordinarily the Subjects which cause these most real Calamities. Behold that which separates those, who with one consent should advance the Glory of their Common Master.

But to come to our Times, and more nearly to touch upon the Evil which

which troubles us at present, and which has given me occasion of laying open my sence, to contribute to a Remedy: Is it not a lamentable thing, and of sad Example, to see Christians so miserably divided, as they are at this Day? For, to let pass the divers Sects of Christians, which are in the *East*, and who have more cause to grieve for their lamentable Divisions, then for their miserable State, under the rigorous Yoke of *Mahometans*; such are the Greeks of *Armenia* and *Circassia*, the *Nestorians*, *Jacobites*, *Maronites*, *Cophtes*, Christians of St *Thomas*, *&c.* People who are looked upon as Hereticks or Schismaticks, and yet who believe that out of their Communion there is no Salvation to be expected; Let us insist only upon this deplorable Condition of the Christians of *Europe*, in these Countries wherein we live. There is no Heart so hard, that does not Sigh to behold so strange a Dis-union; There is no truly Christian Soul, that does not Grieve to see the effects of the implacable Fudes and Hatreds which are amongst those who are looked upon as Brethren; since they are thereby exposed to the continual Insolences of the sworn Enemies of Christianity.

Since this great breach made in the Western Church, by the Separation of the Protestants from the Communion of the Church of *Rome*, What Bloody Wars! How many Murders and Massacres! What Changes and Subversions in States! have there not been seen, insomuch that they have not stuck to have recourse to the Common Enemy, whence they have drawn in Succour against those with whom they should have entertained a true Brotherly Affection? But that which is most deplorable is, that this Division hath been followed with a infinite company of others, and as a fruitful Mother hath produced an incredible number of Monsters, which resemble it. These two great Branches growing one from the other, have also sprouting out of them, a vast company of lesser Branches, which although not equal in Strength, bring forth Fruits altogether as dangerous as their Mother. Among Protestants, how many several Sects in *Germany*, in *England*, in *France*, in the *Low-Countries*, *&c.*? There needs but some diversity in the Habits of Preachers, some difference in the Ceremonies, or Ornaments of Churches, or of the Government thereof, to form a Sect. A simple dissenting in the Liberty which every one allows himself of expounding according to his Fancy, the Mysteries that are above his reach, is sufficient to cause a Separation. The manner of explaining the subject of Predestination, and of Reconciling Gods Grace with the Motions of the Will of Man, makes us look upon those who are of a different Opinion, as People who are in the high-way of Damnation, and with whom we must not entertain any Communion.

Nor

Nor may they who have lived in Communion with the Church of *Rome* inſult at this Diviſion of the Proteſtants, and pretend that Union and Concord have continued amongſt them without any Diviſion: For although they all ſubmit themſelves in appearance to the Authority of one only Head, and that they look upon him as the Center, wherein all the Lines of their Society do meet and are re-united, nevertheleſs we are not ignorant how great the Number of their Diſſentions are, and how little the Union is amongſt their Doctors: So that if the Fear of a Superiour Authority ſeems to retain them in one and the ſame Society, their Hatreds are but the more fermented within. They do not leſs condemn one another of Hereſie, and of being out of the way of Salvation. And the Examples of our Age have ſhewn us, that when Opportunities have been preſented of making their Averſions appear, how far they have carried it, being always deſirous that their particular Opinions might prevail over all others. Therefore it is not any particular Intereſt, that I here endeavour to advance, but it is the general Intereſt of all Chriſtian Societies; It is the Good, and the Union of all thoſe who march under the Standard of the Croſs. I deſign to re-unite together all the Chriſtians of the Eaſt and Weſt, *Greeks* and *Romans*, Catholicks and Proteſtants, and all the divers Branches whereinto theſe latter are ſubdivided.

CHAP. II.

The Firſt Effect of this Diviſion.

Diſquiet of Mind, and Trouble of Conſcience.

WEre there no other Evil in this Diviſion, than the very Diviſion it ſelf, and that Deformity which it cauſes in Chriſtian Societies; Were there no other Harm done by it, than the diſfiguring the Face of Chriſtianity, and the blemiſhing its Beauty that renders it ſo conſiderable, it would be ſo great a cauſe of Grief, as to oblige us to endeavour, with all our Power, to remedy ſo great a Miſchief. But beſides all this, this unhappy Diviſion

is very Fruitful, and produces infinite Evils, as much, or rather more pernicious than it self. 'Tis like the Viper, which by a ſtrange ſelf-dilaceration, makes a great Number of little Serpents come out of her, which inſtantly make their Teeth and Venom appear. There are ſome who ſet upon particular Perſons, and others who cauſe great Diſorders in Societies, both Secular and Eccleſiaſtical, as I undertake to make evident to every one.

The firſt Effect of this Diviſion is Diſquiet and Torment of Mind, wherein They ordinarily plunge themſelves, who are engaged in this Labyrinth of divers Opinions, about matters of Religion; and theſe Opinions do in time form the different Sects and Societies which divide all Chriſtians. A Traveller journeys with pleaſure, ſo long as his way ſeems good and plain, and that he is aſſured it is the Right, that it lies direct, and finds it is not divided into other different Paths; but ſo ſoon as he perceives himſelf in a croſs Road, where he meets with ſeveral Tracks, without knowing which of them he ſhould make choice of, 'tis impoſſible, but that being in this ſuſpence, he muſt have a great unquietneſs and grief of Spirit. If all Chriſtians perfectly agreed in Opinion, that Agreement would be a grand Means whereby we might advance with Pleaſure towards our Happineſs: But meeting with this great Diverſity of Sentiments and Profeſſions, wherein every one boaſts of poſſeſſing the Truth, as by Birth-right, to the Excluſion of all others; we muſt needs be involved in great Perplexity. For to think that we can eaſily ſolve Doubts, by a careful and ſerious applying of our Minds to Meditation, and by the force of reaſoning and diſcourſe, is a Fallacy; for beſides that every one hath cauſe of diſtruſting himſelf amidſt this great Diverſity of Opinions; ſeeing that the cleareſt Wits, the moſt profound Doctors, Men of the choiceſt Endowments, and ſuch as have the greateſt Piety, ſweetneſs and moderation of Temper, are oftentimes obſerv'd to be ſeparated and divided, the one from the other: I am aſſured, that many oft-times in theſe Applications, how Zealous ſoever, nay even after the moſt fervent Prayers, be overſwayed by the Probability of the Arguments, which every Opinion hath produced in its own Favour. And I durſt ſay, that when one has ſo ſoon determin'd in this Scrutiny, there may be ſome reaſon to ſuſpect ſo quick a Reſolution: I am apt to fear that

that this may often respect other Interests, than those of the Glory of God, and our Salvation, which could so quickly make us bend to them. It many times happens that our Education, our Customs, our particular Advantages, and such other Considerations do easily turn the Scales. And that indeed which abuseth us herein, is, That these are slipt in so dexterously, and mixed in such a manner in our Disputations, that we cannot discover them, but by strong and frequent Reflections.

But let us put the Case, that a Man who has an extraordinary Light by the Knowledg of Tongues, and reading good Books, may wade through these Difficulties, and sow his Doubts among these Perplexities; What shall we say of so many common Persons, who have not had, nor even been in a Condition to have, all these profitable Helps, I mean, so necessary for the penetrating into these profound Mysteries, and carrying them through that Labyrinth? Is it because that Christian Religion is not propos'd, but only to the Learned? Is it not as well addressed to the Ignorant, to Women, to Children, and to the poor unlearned Peasants? Must we not rather say, That it is towards such that it turns its most favourable Aspect? That whilst the Doctors are disputing with great Earnestness together, about the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, the most Simple do forcibly take it by the Ardour of their Zeal. Therefore what can we point out more contrary to the Peace and Consolation of these good and simple Souls, than this great Diversity of Opinions, of Sects, and of Religions?

But if it should be objected, That for want of reading, and necessary Study to Search into the most sublime Mysteries of Religion, these ordinary People would be content with what is most plain and most clear in Christian Doctrine, which will suffice to inspire them with the Love of Virtue, and the fear of God; and will be capable to give them Peace of Conscience, and all inward Consolation necessary for them. I shall readily answer, that this is all I demand, and to which I endeavour to reduce all Christians in general. The Christian Religion is equally proposed to all, and in the Distribution of its Graces, it makes no Distinction between the Learned and the Ignorant: The High-towering Wit, and that which creeps among the

Vulgar; as the Remedies and Medicines which Nature offers us, work in the ſame manner upon Perſons of all Conditions and Degrees. So that to be a Man, ſuffices to qualify us for laying claim to the Advantages which Grace preſents to Us in the Doctrin of the Goſpel, and to lay hold of the Aids which it gives us, to make Us Partakers of it.

But ſhould it be likewiſe objected for the clearing this difficult Point, that thoſe who have not the Means and Advantage of penetrating into theſe Secrets, by a deep Meditation, may conſult the Learned to reſolve them, in the Choiſe which they ſhould make of a good and ſure Opinion: Who does not ſee, in the Firſt place, that is not the way to draw them out of the Trouble, wherein they are, ſeeing they do not addreſs themſelves, but to Men who are not Infallible, and who may be pre-poſſeſſed with Prejudices, and have their particular Intereſts; ſo that they ſhall be always in Doubt, whether or no the Advice which was given them, proceeded not from ſome other Principle than the Glory of God, and the Charity, and Deſire of promoting the Salvation of Souls. Moreover, ſhould this Addreſs be made to ſome of thoſe Doctors who follow different Opinions, under colour they are obliged to examine all things, and retain what is beſt: Every one will alledg in his own Favour, all the moſt plauſible Reaſons and Conſiderations which he can, and many times thoſe that are leaſt valid, are moſt ſpecious. After this, can a Man of mean Parts find out in himſelf Light enough, and diſcerning to carry him through thoſe Difficulties, which make a Separation amongſt Men of far greater Parts, and more refined Judgments than his Own.

But laſt of all, what ſhall we ſay of the poor Labourer, or ſimple Tradeſman, who has ever been bred in a Country, where ſome one of theſe Sects prevails? We know, that ſuch a Sect forces thoſe of the Country perfectly to acquieſce in it: That it requires every one to ſubmit, without any Contradiction, to all that it ſhall preſcribe: That there are ſome Sects, who ſuffer not their Followers to enter into any Diſcuſſion of what they lay down to follow, and compel them to a blind Obedience. As for Example, what can a poor Soul do, who has been born in the midſt of *Italy* or *Spain*, where Reigns a moſt ſevere Inquiſition, or in the

the fartheſt Parts of *Denmark*, or *Swedland*, where are none but Proteſtants, when he ſhall learn that there are other People elſewhere in great Numbers, who are called Chriſtians, boaſting themſelves to have Truth in its greateſt Purity, and doom all to Eternal Torments who are not of their Opinion? Is it not certain, that a poor Wretch in this condition, not being able to have any Commerce, nor Conference with thoſe of whom he hath been told this, will have ſo much more Trouble in his Mind, by how much his Paſſion is greater that ſtirs up in him a Deſire of his own Happineſs? Which makes us ſee the Neceſſity of bringing together all Chriſtians under one common Principle: And this Principle muſt contain Maxims, Eaſie, Intelligible and Indiſputable. In a Word, this Principle muſt be ſuch, that it may produce Peace and inward Comfort, and guide all the Faithful, by the Practice of Holineſs, to the Enjoyment of an Immortal Crown.

CHAP. III.

The Second Effect of this Diviſion.

That it deſtroys the Study of Holineſs, and eſpecially the Practice of Charity.

THE Principal Deſign of the Goſpel, and I dare ſay the only one, is to bring Men by the Knowledg of its Myſteries, to the ſtudy of Virtue, and to conduct them by the Practice of this Virtue, to the Enjoyment of Happineſs and Glory. So that we may ſay, That the ſacred Chain of our Salvation hath Three Links, to wit, the Knowledg of Truths, the Practice of Virtues, and the Poſſeſſion of Happineſs. And if this Salvation be compared to a Building, the Revelations of the Goſpel may be ſaid to be the Foundation and Baſis of it, Celeſtial Glory is the Covering, and Virtue that which joyns theſe Two Extreams together, making us paſs from the Knowledg to the Poſſeſſion of the Object known, where all our Felicity reſides. So that whatever gives any Impediment to this Knowledg, the ſame obſtructs

ſtructs the Progreſs of Virtue, and ſtaggers the Hope of Felicity. The Firſt receives no Blow, wherefore the Two others feel not the Impreſſion. And this is ſeen in theſe lamentable Diviſions, which not only caſt us into Diſquiet, as hath been ſaid; but alſo in diſturbing Mens Knowledg, they hinder Holineſs, and pervert the Practice of Chriſtian Virtues. The principal Part whereof, conſiſts in the Piety and Zeal, which we bring to the Service of God. And the principal exerciſe of Piety conſiſts in the Sacred Commerce, which the Faithful entertain with their God, by Prayer. So that whatſoever troubles our Prayer, the ſame brings a notable Prejudice to a Life of Holineſs. If, as St. *Peter* teaches us [1 *Pet.* 3. 7.] the idle domeſtick Contentions, which ariſe from the want of Unity between Husband and Wife, are capable to interrupt our Prayers, and blaſt the Fruit of this ſaving Exerciſe; what ſhall we ſay then of the Contentions which divide the Chriſtian Church into ſo many different Societies? How can we expect that our Chriſtian Vows ſhould unite together, to aſcend more readily to our common Father, whilſt our Opinions, and conſequently our Inclinations remain ſo contrary?

One of the principal Means required for our right obſerving of Holineſs, is the Repoſe and Tranquility of the Soul: Sweetneſs alſo and Moderation are neceſſary, which make us look upon things without any Prejudice, and the engagement of particular Intereſts. If then (as we have plainly ſhewed) this Diviſion throws us into ſuch Diſquietneſs and Trouble, every one may judg how prejudicial it is to the Notions of true Piety. Is it not certain, that if we would employ in the Study of Piety and good Works, the Time which we allow our ſelves for the examining of all thoſe Queſtions which divide us; We ſhould quickly make great Progreſs in the Way which leads to eternal Life?

The Emperor *Antoninus* exhorted thoſe who were deſirous to advance in the Practice of Moral Virtues, to deſiſt from the reading of Books, chiefly ſuch as treated of Philoſophy, as being only a Hinderance to their Deſign. If, ſaid he, any ſhould perſwade thee to read, do thou immediately anſwer, I have no time to buſie my Head about theſe things; I have a greater and more important Affair in hand, which requires a Man's whole Attendance.

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Attendance. My Business is to tame my Passions, and to make my self every Day a more virtuous Man, and to discharge my principal Duties. May we not in like manner say, to these curious Wits, who give up themselves intirely to such thorny Questions? This is not that whereunto ye were called, leave off all these Contentions; You lose the most precious thing in the World, which is your time. Rather study to become a true Christian, that is, to be Humble, fearing God, loving your Neighbour, preserving your Body in Purity, avoiding Evil, and continually endeavouring to edifie those with whom you converse.

If Holiness be no other thing than a precious Crown, composed of all Christian and Moral Virtues, I believe there is none but will grant me that the fairest Flower of that Crown is Charity towards our Neighbour, which St. *Paul* calls the Bond of Perfection, *Col.* 3. Now this Virtue consists in loving our Neighbour, as our self; considering that he bears the Characters of the Image of God; that we enter both one and the other into the Communion of the same Society, and that we are called to be made Partakers together of one and the same Inheritance. This admirable Virtue is so excellent, that some, with good Reason, call it the Soul of Religion, the Fountain of all other Virtues; or to speak more properly, Virtue it self, which takes divers Names, according to the Diversity of the Subjects whereon it is exercised. It is called Piety, when it looks up towards Heaven, to pay Homage to its Soveraign; we call it Charity, when enclining towards the Earth, it studies to do good to its Fellow Servants: In a word, it receives the Names of other Virtues, as of Temperance, of Modesty, of Humility, *&c.* when it is reflected back upon its self, by the Motions of that Legitimate Love, which it bears it self. Therefore if this Monster of Division be capable to destroy Charity, which establishes the Essence of Holiness, it is manifest, that nothing can be conceived more prejudicial to Virtue, than the Dis-union and Alienation of Mens Minds: And as Charity proposes nothing but Peace, Union, and Concord, for its Aim is straitly to tye the Knots of a Holy Amity, there can nothing be so diametrically Opposite to it as Division, which cutting all these Knots,

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and breaking these sacred Bonds, does divide all that which should be most united.

To confirm this Truth; Let us make a Parallel of the Effects of this Charity, which St. *Paul* thus reckons up, 1 *Cor.* 13. with those which Division produces. Charity is of a patient Spirit, Division is Turbulent and Unquiet: Charity is Kind and Bountiful, Division only spreads Hatred and Malice: Charity is not Envious, but Envy raigns particularly in Division, where each Party respects the Obligation of their proper Interests: Charity is not Insolent, nor puffed up with Glory, whereas Division is Fierce, Proud, and Insupportable; it inspires those who possess it with a Desire to abase and oppress others, if it be possible, that they may raise up themselves, and rule without Competitor: Charity seeks not its own Ends, is not Dispiteful, and thinks no Evil. These ill Qualities are the true Characters of Division, in which it hath no other End, than the Advancement of its own Party, to the Detriment of all others. Charity rejoyces not in Injustice, but altogether in the Truth; Division oppresses the Truth, and is never pleased, but with Unrighteousness and Violence: Charity Endures, Believes, Hopes, and bears all things; Division causes Suspicions and Jealousies to arise, gives ill Interpretations to Actions, and even to the most innocent Words, and drives us into Passion and Impatience, into Murmuring and Extravagancies. And to draw the last Line to this Parallel, God grant that as Charity never fails, but is maintained in the very Ruin of all that which is most Glorious, and most firm in Society; so on the other side, by the Rule of Contraries, that we may quickly see this unhappy Division utterly decay and cease, by a perfect uniting of all Christians.

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CHAP. IV.

The Third Effect of this Division.

That it makes Men Irreligious, and causes Atheism.

IN all Divisions, which tear in pieces Kingdoms and Monarchies, each Side at the first does boast by their Manifestoes and Declarations, that they took not up Arms but for the Publick Good, and for maintaining the Crown and Authority of the Prince: And although those Parties be so contrary and averse, that their Swords are drawn, and in a readiness to decide their Quarrel, yet both of them have the confidence to alledge in their Vindication, the Justice of their Cause, and Interest of their Soveraign; whilst in the End, all tend to the utter subversion of the State, and total change of the Government. And it will many times happen in these Contests, that the most Mutinous and most Seditious, do make themselves Masters of Soveraign Authority. So is it ordinarily seen, that in the division of Opinions in Religion, every one protests, that no other Argument or Interest perswades him to follow the Religion that he embraces, but the real Love of Truth, and desire of his Salvation. All those who would be the Promoters and Spreaders of some new Opinion, shew an extraordinary Devotion and Zeal at the beginning, but by little and little all that degenerates, and all the Overtures which Division makes, serve but as so many Doors, by which, at last, Impiety, Irreligion, and Atheism do slip in. 'Tis amidst these Differences that we commonly see some new Religion thrust in it self among us, which differs but very little from the disclaiming of all Religion. Just so was it by means of the divers Sects, which heretofore sprang up in the Church, that the Doctrine of *Mahomet* has taken such footing in the World; every one knows how wide the Division of the Eastern and Western Churches was at that time. And I do not believe but that the great diversity of Judgments and Religions, which we see at present in Christianity, hath been the cause of this coldness and

want of Devotion amongſt us, in what we call *Chriſtian Society*. Inſomuch that Piety and Religion ſeem only to be left in full Authority amongſt Women, and the Vulgar.

This Evil ariſes from hence, that the greateſt part of Men either cannot, or will not give themſelves the trouble of ſearching into theſe different Opinions, to determine which they might cloſe with; ſo they chooſe rather to believe nothing abſolutely, than to be always in ſuſpence about what they ought to believe. As the great diverſity of Medicines, which are preſcribed to a Patient, do very often make him refuſe all, thinking it better to reign up all to venture at once, rather than ſtand ſo long about making his choice of the Remedies which are propoſed to him. Some go towards it, but with ſuch a kind of negligence and natural ſloath, that makes them apprehend a great deal of trouble in it: And theſe eſteem it better to ſuſpend all manner of Action, than undertake any thing, that requires ſo much care and intenſneſs of thought concerning it. Theſe are like lazy Soldiers, who ſuffer themſelves to be kill'd, rather than they'l couragiouſly take up their Arms, and ſtand to their own Defence: Or thoſe, who out of a deſperate Fury, thruſt a Dagger into their own Breaſts, for fear, leſt their Enemy is preſſing upon them to do it.

There are others who dare not venture upon this Tryal, through the diſtruſt they have of themſelves, and of their own Power: They do not feel themſelves ſtrong enough to ſuſtain ſuch a Weight, nor able to break through all thoſe Difficulties which they meet with. This obliges ſome blindly to follow the firſt that is preſented them, and ſuffer themſelves to be led by thoſe who pretend to have Skill herein; ſuppoſing they are in a good condition, if they put themſelves under the conduct of their Leaders. And others ſtand Neuters, not daring to adhere to any Party, out of a diſtruſt they have of all ſuch as offer themſelves to them; and this it is that cauſes Irreligion and Atheiſm. Yet are there ſome whoſe Fault is not neglect of Examining theſe different Queſtions, but the true Reaſon of it is, becauſe they are not indeed capable of it. Such are all Peaſants and Mechanicks, and others, who know nothing more than what belongs to their Employments, and who, being taken out of that,

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are as if they were in an unknown Countrey, where they are ignorant both of the Ways and Language: It puts them to a ſtand, as though they had neither Sence nor Motion: They make all their Devotion, and all the Service which they ſhould pay to God, to conſiſt in the well-obſerving theſe outward Actions of Religion in which they have been trained up. Witneſs the poor Chriſtians of *Muſcovia*, all whoſe Religion is no more than juſt a ſhewing to thoſe who deſire to be informed of their Belief, the Image of ſome Saint, which they carry about with them. And others alſo, who think that if they know but how to make the Sign of the Croſs aright, may paſs for very good Chriſtians. Therefore, if, inſtead of puzzelling our ſelves about ſo many Queſtions and Controverſies, we would ſtudy to bring back the Chriſtian Doctrine to its true Principles, which are but few in Number, and eaſie for all ſorts of Perſons to comprehend, it would be the ready way to make True Chriſtians, who would know what is really Eſſential in their Doctrine, and ſo would quickly be brought to a true Piety, and to the Fear of God, which is the only Deſign of Chriſtian Religion.

Here it may alſo be added, That this great diverſity of Opinions begets a ſtrange Prejudice in certain Spirits: For there are many who would make us believe, that Truth is ſo evident and perceiveable, by all where it is reveal'd, that it ſhines as the Sun, which dims the Light of all the other Stars. Wherefore they conclude, that if Chriſtian Religion contains thoſe Saving Truths which came from God, were brought down from Heaven to Earth, and attended with Glory and Miracles, it would immediately obſcure with its Splendor all ſeeming Truths, which ſtrive to have a counterfeit Luſtre to reſemble it. When therefore they ſee that every one of theſe different Opinions upholds it ſelf by ſuch probable Reaſons, that many are ſtaggered at the conſideration of them: They cannot be perſwaded that this Gold is to be found in the Earth, becauſe it doth not immediately diſcover to them its glittering Light. And as they cannot conceive that it is fit for them to remain one Moment in ſuſpence for the ſeparating of Truth from Falſhood and Errour, they forſake both one and the other, to ſecure themſelves from the Danger of being forced to a new Change: Thoſe Perſons would certainly

refuſe to take a Sum of Money, (if offered them,) out of a diſtruſt, that they ſhould not know the Coines, and that they ſhould not diſcern Falſe Money from Good: Whence we may judge, how great the Prejudice is, which this Diviſion brings to Men's Salvation. An unhappy Deſign, that under the Pretence of an exact Search for the Truth, deſtroys the Principal Effect of Chriſtian Religion, which is the Salvation and Comfort of Souls!

CHAP. V.

The Fourth Effect of Diviſion.

That it keeps back all thoſe who are without, and breeds in them a Diſlike of Chriſtian Religion.

The preaching of the Goſpel, being as it were a publick Proclamation, to invite Men to liſt themſelves under the Enſigns of *Jeſus Chriſt*: It is undeniable, that whatſoever obſtructs this Holy Summons, is contrary to the intent and purpoſe of the Goſpel, and troubles the eſtabliſhment of the Eternal Reign of the Son of God; And this ſame is one of the principal effects of the Diviſion of Chriſtians. Thoſe who are without the bounds of Chriſtianity, as *Turks*, *Jews*, and *Pagans* may juſtly reproach us, with the want of a true underſtanding amongſt our ſelves. Reſolve how to ſettle (will they ſay) your different Opinions, before you go about to perſwade us to follow you. Firſt unite your ſelves together, and then we will conſider whether or no we ſhall unite with you. And ſince Unity and Verity are inſeparable; How, in this great Difference of your Opinions, ſhall we be aſſured that you will propound the Truth to us? And certainly there can be no greater Scandal to our Religion, in the Sight of thoſe without, than this deplorable Diviſion. The *Sieur de la Boulaye* [Chap. 18.] In his Voyages to the *Levant*, ſaith, That the *Turks* perceiving this vitious Exceſs of Strife, and multitude of Diviſions amongſt Chriſtians, have confirmed themſelves, by this Means in their own way, and think God to be the Author of them. 'Tis by Reaſon of this, St *Paul* ſays [Rom. 2.]

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That the Name of God is deſpiſed, becauſe of us, among the Gentiles. And yet the bad Lives, and Extravagancies of particular Perſons, do not bring ſo much Prejudice to Chriſtian Religion, as the diverſity of Opinions in its Doctrine. Of the Firſt it may be ſaid, That theſe are but the Faults of certain Perſons, whoſe Profeſſion is not anſwerable to their Religion: That that may be innocent, though they are criminal, who pretend to follow it. But when the Evil is in the Opinions; it may be thought that the Defect is in the Doctrine it ſelf. So that they have ſome Reaſons to offer their Objections againſt it, and to ſuſpect the Truth of the whole. Therefore if it be the Purity of the Doctrine, rather than the Deportment of particular Perſons, that muſt draw us to one Communion; without all queſtion, that which reſults from this Doctrine, will make a greater Impreſſion upon Mens Spirits, than that which only regards the Manners of ſome few Men.

'Tis generally obſerved that things are not maintained, but by the Aid of that which firſt contributed to their Production. The ſame Influences of the Heavens, which made thoſe Seeds ſprout up, that the Earth hath been intruſted with, ſerve likewiſe to raiſe the Plants to their Perfections. Therefore ſome ambitious and unſteady Brains have taken Occaſion by the Diviſion of Chriſtians, to give Birth to a Sect, which hath utterly departed from the Fundamental Principles of Chriſtianity; for it was by the Means of this Diſ-union, that a new Religion hath been formed, and a falſe Prophet ſubſtituted in the Room of the Eternal Son of God, who alone inſpired all the true Prophets. It is not to be wondred then (ſuch Diviſions continuing in the Church) if theſe poor miſ-led Souls remain confirmed in their Opinions; and ſince that which firſt alienated them from us, ſtill remains, the Averſion which they have to our Myſteries, remains likewiſe. So long as the *Roman* Armies were well united, that their Commanders held a perfect Underſtanding amongſt themſelves, and their Souldiers were kept in a true Obedience and Submiſſion to their Orders, other Nations endeavoured to procure their Amity with great Eagerneſs; they eſteemed it a Glory to enter into Alliance with this People, and many have made no Difficulty to receive their Yoke, to whoſe Dominion, they thought all others

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ought to ſubmit: But ſo ſoon as Miſ-underſtandings happened between their Generals and Souldiers, and Revolts amongſt the Subjects, other States deſpiſed their Alliance, and took up Armes againſt them, plainly ſeeing that they were not Invincible, ſince they were ſubject to Diviſion. Juſt ſo, our Diſ-union makes us an Object of the Contempt and Averſion of all other People. After this, can we think it ſtrange, that ſo many Exhortations, Sermons, and Writings, which have paſſed continually amongſt Chriſtians, ſhould make ſo few real Proſelites?

In the Apoſtles Time, One Sermon alone converted many Thouſands of Infidels to the Faith. At the End of St *Peter*'s Sermon, Three thouſand Souls, by Baptiſm ranged themſelves under the Standard of the Croſs. [Act. 2.] It was alſo at that ſame time that all Chriſtians dwelt together with one common Accord, and had all but one Heart, and one Soul. Whereas at this preſent, we drive back by our Diviſions thoſe whom we invite by our Exhortations. But if it ſhould be objected, That the Church makes now great Progreſs in the *Indies*; I dare ſay, with Pardon for my Opinion, That theſe poor People have not yet attained to the Knowledg of our Diviſions, and that if they ſhould underſtand them, their Zeal would quickly wax cold, and all theſe Conqueſts would be of no long continuance.

When the Proteſtants firſt ſeparated from the Communion of the Church of *Rome*, ſo long as they kept an Uniformity in their Opinions, they made marvellous Progreſs, the Union which was amongſt them drew a great part of *Europe* to their Profeſſion: But ſo ſoon as they divided themſelves into ſeveral Branches, they have put a Stop to their Conqueſts, and had no further thought, than to maintain themſelves, both thoſe whom they have forſaken, and ſuch as have forſaken them.

And it is not only from the ill Example of this Diviſion, that Strangers to the Faith are driven from it: But they are diſcouraged by the very Intrigues and Stratagems of the Chriſtians, who are ſo ſeparated and divided among themſelves. Their Diviſion creates ſuch Animoſities one againſt the other, that they do their utmoſt endeavour, to hinder thoſe who have an earneſt deſire to embrace Chriſtianity, from entring into any other Chriſtian Communion, but their own.

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There are others who go yet further, for they hold it as a true Maxim, That it is better for a *Jew* or *Mahometan* to perſiſt in his old Errour, than to thruſt himſelf into ſome of the Chriſtian Societies, which they diſapprove. So that as it is impoſſible for Iron equally drawn between two Loadſtones, to move either towards the one, or the other. So theſe different Sollicitations which Chriſtians make to draw Infidels to them, leaves them in a Neutral State, not knowing which Side to take, nor to which they ſhould determine their Judgments.

CHAP. VI.

The Fifth Effect of this Diviſion.

Trouble in Church and State.

THe Evil of this Diviſion is not limited only to particular Perſons, but all Societies, as well Eccleſiaſtical, as Civil, have too great a feeling of it: For we daily ſee ſtrange Tempeſts happen in both, which had no other cauſe for the forming of them, than this ſad Diſ-union. And has not the Church much reaſon to complain, that thoſe who are called her Children ſhould tear out her Bowels? That ſhe can expect nothing but Death even from thoſe to whom ſhe hath given Life? Since they to whom ſhe continually adminiſters the Sacred Milk of her pure Doctrine, and of her wholeſome Inſtructions, do give her ſo many grievous Wounds, as they form Sects in her: In multiplying, they diſ-member Her, and each ſtriving to draw her to their Side, at laſt nothing is ſeen to remain, but her mangled and broken Pieces. And what is more, theſe deplorable Reliques of the Church, have likewiſe been ſo miſerably handled, that ſhe is no longer to be known; inſomuch that they might rather be taken for the Parts of ſome miſhapen Monſter, than for the Members of the Divine Spouſe of *Jeſus Chriſt*, waſhed in the Blood of her dear Lord, and clothed with the Sacred Robe of his Righteouſneſs.

But that I may not be thought to aggravate these things, and raise them with an Hyperbole: Let us but consider the present Face of the Church; Is it not true, that we shall have much ado to meet any one of these Societies, which call themselves a Church, and attribute the Truth solely to themselves, where these ill Characters are not to be seen? First, a certain high conceited Opinion of the Principles they have embraced, which creates in them a blind Perswasion, without examining it, and whereof not any solid Reason can be given. Birth, Education, Worldly Interests, and other Engagements of this Nature, together with a kind of Negligence and Fear of being accounted inconstant, and unsettled, if they should turn to another Party: These things, I say, have ordinarily a greater Influence for the Establishment of them in their Religion, than Reason and Conscience have: All which is followed by a certain Obstinacy, not to call it Self-conceitedness, in maintaining their belief at any rate whatsoever.

There are those who many times do hazard, on this Occasion, all that they hold dearest in the World, even to their very Lives; which passes in every One of these Societies, for an Exquisite Zeal, and an examplary Devotion. Nor is there any one of these Sects, which has not a Catalogue of its Confessors, and that cannot produce its Roll of Martyrs. But how many are there of these Martyrs, who if they had been demanded to give a Reason of the Doctrine, for which they made so much constancy appear, would have been gravelled, and have little to answer, to the least Argument that might have been proposed to them? Many times false Opinions are maintained with as much heat, as the True. Also Illusions and Impostures do make as strong Impression upon our Spirits, as real Objects. And this obstinacy draws after it an extream Aversion to all other Religions, and even to all other Christian Societies: It either accuses them of Blindness, of Stupidity, or of Malice. 'Tis nothing else, say they, but Fleshly Interest, that seems a Foundation of their Doctrine: They reproach them, that their Opinions are altogether destructive to true Piety; that they hurry Men into Superstition and to Idolatry, or else to Libertinism or Atheism. And some there are, who are pointed out by others, as if they were frightful Monsters. In a word, any Protestation, or any Declaration,

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which they make, that it is the Doctrine they loath, and not the Persons who take it up: That it is the Errour they detest, but that they have Charity and Compassion, for such as are mis-led, is enough with them: Which yet shall never make me believe, but that the precedent Qualities are accompanied with a great Animosity of Spirit, against those who are not of the same Opinion. For how can we sincerely love those, whom we look upon as Enemies to God, and Disciples of Satan, whose Lot and Portion is Hell, where they shall be made a Prey to the Devils?

Are there not likewise very dreadful Examples, in what manner they have reciprocally treated one another, in those places where they are mingled together? The weak imploy such Arms as are most convenient against their Adversaries, which are Injuries and Reproaches: The Powerful strait pass to Action; there is no Craft nor Subtilty, no Violence nor Cruelty, which these People set not a work, utterly to exterminate such as follow a different Profession from theirs. The *Roman* Catholick persecutes the Protestant, in those Places where he is strongest. The Protestant, he requites him where he has the Power and Authority in his own Hands. And amongst Protestants, those who are of different Opinions, are not treated more favourably.

☞ Heretofore the Christians complained much, that the *Pagans* would force them to Sacrifice to their gods, and quit their Religion. [*Tertul. Apolog.* 28.] They grounded not their Complaint on any other Reason than this, that Religion, as they affirmed, ought to be an Act of a pure and free Mind. But now a days, Christians do the same thing towards Christians. We have seen times, where Tortures and the Cruelest Punishments, have been used by Christians, for afflicting other Christians, and for no other cause, but their not being of the same Judgments and Perswasions.

And now after this, who can take it ill that I have no more represented the *Church*, as the Ship which the Son of God conveyeth safe amidst the Storms wherewith she is continually battered, but to the lamentable Wrecks of a Vessel daiht in Pieces, not by the Rage and Fury of contrary Elements, but by the Negligence of those within her, and Misunderstanding of her Conductors

This Evil is alſo very communicative; 'Tis like a Gangrene, which never ſtays in one place, but corrupts all the Neighbouring Parts: States, and all Bodies Politique are very ſenſible of the Effects of this Diviſion. We might ſay of this Evil, as of the Leproſie deſcribed by *Moſes*, that it not only infects Men, but the very Towns and Places where they dwell. I dare affirm, that of Thirty Wars, which have happened in *Europe*, within theſe Hundred and Fifty Years, Five and Twenty have had the Differences of Religion for the Occaſions of them, or at leaſt, that they have either been accompanied or followed by ſome Intereſts of Religion. If any would throw the Apple of Diſcord into a Nation, to trouble it, and raiſe Civil Wars at Home, to the End, that Foreigners might have an Opportunity of Attacking it; They need but uſe Means to cauſe ſome Differences to be moved about the Government of the Church; Find ſome Fault with the Ornaments of the Altars; Cloath in a different manner thoſe who are to Adminiſter Divine Service; or introduce ſome Diverſity in the Liturgy, and in the Publique Prayers. This will be ſufficient to diſturb the Peace of a Nation, and abſolutely turn it upſide down. Examples of this are ſo freſh, and ſo dreadful amongſt us, that I need not produce them to confirm what I lay before you. If we would favour the Rebellion of any Country, or back the Pretenſions of ſome Uſurper: 'Tis but publiſhing that the Reaſon why we take up Arms in their Favour, is to give Liberty to weak and tender Conſciences, and to be Inſtrumental in giving poor diſtreſſed Chriſtians a Freedom of Praying to God Almighty, and of performing all the Exerciſes of their Devotion without Conſtraint. There is nothing impoſſible to be effected under this Specious Pretence: there is no manner of Exceſs and Violence, which on theſe Occaſions they do not dreſs up in the Cloak of Piety and Zeal.

Tantum Religio potuit ſuadere malorum.

Moreover, there are no Fewds to be compared to thoſe which ſpring from the Hearts of Perſons diſſenting in Religion: And till theſe Fewds ceaſe, and an Union be made, we muſt never expect to ſee that the States of Chriſtendom ſhould well agree together,

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gether, to resist the Common Enemies of their Profession, and put a full Stop to their Progress, who never prevailed but by means of our Divisions, nor advanced their Conquests but by help of our Mis-understandings. If one only Place, as *Candia*, scituate in an Island, whose Inhabitonts were all Enemies to it, could be capable to withstand, for so many Years, the whole *Ottoman* Power; What would it do, if the Armies of all Christians were joyned together to repress the Insolency of an Enemy, detesting so much the Name of a Christian? 'Tis now most visible that he had not been Victorious, but because we did not defend our selves: He gained no Ground, but meerly for want of our Opposition; and gave us no Wounds, but by those Gashes which we gave our selves. If we would all stir by Agreement, for the Glory of our Common Master, and help to push forward what is already so succesfully begun, for advancing the Standard of Christ: All those Advantages which we promise our selves from the Victories we gain over our Fellow-brethren, are not comparable to those which would accrue to us by our Conquests of these braving Enemies. And let not those Christian Princes, whose Territories ly far distant from *Constantinople*, flatter themselves in their own Thoughts, with the Advantage of their Scituation; for should those Frontiers, which serve at present for a Bulwark to Christendom, have been once mastered by the *Turks* (as of late they seemed in danger to be) they might have forced a Passage into the Heart of the most remote Countries. I wish with all my Heart, that the Drums and Trumpets of these Infidels, may be a means to gather Us once more together, and be as a Signal to put us in mind of uniting our selves quickly, and labouring altogether for our own Preservation.

In the last Place, this Consideration may be added to the precedent ones, to make us see the Evil that this Division causes in States. Let us suppose that in a Kingdom, or any other Christian State, those who govern it, should perceive they have been mistaken in the Opinion which they have held; and that seeing they have not the Truth on their side, they are in danger of losing their Souls. I dare affirm, the Nature of this Division is such, that it would be very difficult, nay almost impossible to procure their own Salvation, and the Salvation of those who

are under their Authority; the Intereſts of State are ſo mixed and woven with thoſe of Religion; the Intrigues and Alliances, which are made with thoſe of the ſame Communion, are ſo ſtrong, that in going about to ſeparate them, it would endanger a loſs of all. As for Example, If a King, who is a *Roman* Catholick, ſhould come to believe that the Foundations of his Religion are not ſound, that (as the Proteſtants alledg) they contain certain Principles that are prejudicial to the Salvation of Souls.

Who does not conceive but that this Prince would meet with impregnable Difficulties in going about to ſet his Conſcience at reſt? Is it not certain that ſo ſoon as he ſhould diſcover his Thoughts, his Subjects would be in Danger to riſe up in Rebellion againſt Him? The whole Body of his State would endeavour to oppoſe his Deſigns, and his Allies be apt to forſake him, to ſide with that Party that ſhould be againſt him? The ſame might be ſaid of Proteſtant Princes. The Politicians, who oppoſe themſelves to any Change or Innovation in Religion, of what Nature ſoever it be: Who look upon it as a Flame that muſt be quenched in the inſtant, would ſtrive to render all the Endeavours of a Prince unprofitable, that ſhould have any ſuch Thoughts. Therefore by this it is evident, that it is the Ground and Intereſt of all Chriſtian States, to endeavour the healing of theſe Diviſions; as well for their own Subſiſtence and Preſervation, as for the Safety and Quiet of the Conſciences of thoſe who Govern them.

PAX REDUX

OR THE

Christian Reconciler.

PART II.

Of the Causes of this Division which is among Christians.

CHAP. I.

That the Frame and Temper of Men's Minds doth much contribute to this Evil.

WHatsoever things pass through the Hands of Men, always savour of that Quality which is predominant in them; as Waters take their Tincture from the Channels through which they run; if the Channels be impure, the Waters quickly lose that Purity, which from the Fountain Head they derived. So Christian Doctrine, the same which was given us by the Son of God, and proposed to us by his Apostles, is most pure and most Holy: But it has been much abused by the ill Qualities

Qualities of ſuch as have handled it ſince thoſe bleſſed Times: It hath paſſed through foul Hands, which have made it loſe much of its Original Beauty. The Univerſal Paſſion, and that which chiefly raigns amongſt Men, is Vanity and Pride; and that likewiſe is it, which has given the firſt Soil to Chriſtian Doctrine. There have been ſome, who have thought it too plain and too courſe, for Wits higher than the common Level. Every one of thoſe who have fancied themſelves to have any degree of Light above others, have had a deſire to cloath it after their own Mind. Many have believed they had a Right to interpoſe their Judgments in the moſt profound Myſteries; yea, ſome have been ſo raw and bold, as to add of their own Heads what they eſteemed neceſſary to its Perfection: And this it is, that has given a beginning to the great Diverſity of Opinions, which are at this Day in Religion.

Hence has it come to paſs, that ſome learned Doctors having made the firſt Advance of their particular Opinions in Religion, Others having come afterwards (thinking no leſs of themſelves than the former) have taken a Liberty of examining their Tenents, and have further thought they were obliged to overthrow them, and eſtabliſh others, by which Means they hoped to make themſelves famous, in being the Authors of a new Opinion, and Founders of a Sect. The firſt carried by the ſame Motive, which at the Beginning had induced them to propoſe new Doctrines, were not willing to recant them; for it is not ſo much the Perſwaſion of the Truth of what they have broached, that obliges Men to perſiſt in it, as the Fear and Shame of diſowning that which they have once aſſerted, and that New-commers ſhould be able to diſcover their Faults, and teach them any thing. So that every one ſtanding up for their own Notions, and being unwilling to let themſelves be run down, and vanquiſhed: This impertinent Self-conceitedneſs, has laid the Foundation of theſe great Diviſions.

This Evil might in ſome Meaſure have been ſuffered, if Such had been contented to declare their Opinions, as the meer Products of humane Wit: And if particular Perſons keeping them within their own Breaſts, had left others the Liberty of examining them, either to receive, or reject them, according to the

Judgment

Judgment that they should make of them. But as when some thinking they want Credit to establish what they are desirous to put in Practise, have commonly Recourse to a superiour Authority, whereby they procure that to pass in their Favour, which otherwise would not have been considered of: So all Parties contending in Matters of Religion, and not believing themselves sufficiently strengthened by their own Reasons and Authority, do presently declare it to be the Interest of God, and his Cause, that they defend; and every one of these particularly, protests that whosoever rejects what he delivers, rejects the heavenly Doctrine, throws down the Pillars of Christian Religion, walks out of the true Church, and exposes himself to Eternal Damnation. So that drawing thus straightly the Bonds which should engage Men's Consciencies in their Parties, they have occasioned particular Animosities, widened the Division, and rendred the Evil more incurable. For whither will not the Wit of Man carry him, when he shall be possessed with an Opinion, that whatsoever he does, tends to the Glory of God, and the Salvation of his own Soul?

There are Two different sorts of Spirits, to whom the Doctrine of the Gospel is proposed; the First are Bold and Active, the Second Timorous and always very Distrustful of themselves: The former easily undertaking to establish new Opinions, and to give Beginning to Division; the latter contributed not a little to the fomenting and increasing of it, through their Timorousness and Facility, not daring to depart from what their Predecessors have prescribed them. And as in Seditions, the Forward and Busy Spirits are they which raise the Tumults, and stir up others, while the Rabble being prepared by some artificial and plausible Declaration, finish the Disorder by the Liberty which they give themselves, and is allowed them by the grand Mutineers: So it is in Religion; for the ordinary People being naturally Ignorant, cannot hit upon the right way, but by chance; it must be their great good Fortune, or to say better, a divine Conduct which must guide them to it, and not any Choice or Search of their own. And yet the most inferiour sort of People are they that are fiercest and most eager in maintaining the Religion which they blindly follow, and whereof they, for the most

moſt part have but little Knowledg and Underſtanding. *Tertullian* complains, in his Apology, That the *Pagans* condemned the Doctrin of the Chriſtians, which they were ignorant of: And how many Chriſtians are there now a days, who condemn the Opinions of other Chriſtians, without knowing them? 'Tis therefore from this popular and blind Paſſion, that the Grand Leaders, and Politick Heads of Factions, ſerve themſelves to ſtrengthen their Sides, advance their Deſigns, and take away all Means of Reconciliation between Party and Party.

Now theſe Heads of Sects, and all thoſe, who following their Principles, pretend to have a Share in their Glory, do play another Game, to attain more eaſily to their Ends; which is this, They ſtrive many times to engage the Politicians in their Cauſe, making them believe that their Doctrine is the moſt proper to hold the common People in Subjection, and in Obedience to their Superiours; that it prevents all manner of Inſurrections, Seditions and Rebellions. In effect, I believe there is ſcarce any Sect of Chriſtians, which does not boaſt to have this Advantage above others; they tax all thoſe who oppoſe their Tenents with building upon ſuch Foundations as are only fit to bring Diſturbance upon States, and to alienate the Affections of Subjects from their Princes; at leaſt they affirm, That others have Principles which do not preſs home enough this Article, Of the Obedience which is due to Magiſtrates. 'Tis well known what the *Roman* Catholicks ſay of the Doctrine of the Proteſtants on this Subject: 'Tis alſo well enough known on the other ſide, how the Proteſtants reproach them, by reaſon of the Power which they ſeem to give to a Foreign Nation to conquer ſuch as deny Obedience to the *Pope*'s Authority. Whence it comes to paſs, that according to the Face which the Politicians ſet on theſe things, they favour thoſe whom they ſuppoſe do contribute moſt by their Doctrine, to the Peace and Quiet of States, which is their Soveraign Good. Likewiſe when a Religion is once eſtabliſhed in any State, it is the Prudence and Care of thoſe who govern, that makes them ſtrive to prevent any Change thereof, by reaſon of the great Diſorders which may ariſe from it. Therefore thoſe Doctors who have no other Aim, than that of maintaining the Opinions which they have eſtabliſhed or embraced,

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do their utmoſt Endeavour to bring into Diſgrace, with the Magiſtrates of their Country, all of different Tenents from theirs. They make them believe that all who are not of the ſame Mind with them, go about to undermine the Foundations of Religion, that they might ſubſtitute another in its Room: Thus by their Subtilty they arm the Secular Power, againſt thoſe who would promote Doctrines perchance more Innocent, or better Founded than theirs.

CHAP. II.

That there has never yet been made a true Diſtinction in Chriſtian Religion, of what is really Eſſential and Fundamental, and what is not.

ALthough the Minds of thoſe who have embraced Chriſtianity, may be diverſly diſpoſed; yet they all agree in this one Point; That there are certain Doctrines in Religion which are Eſſential and Fundamental, and others likewiſe of leſs Importance. They all acknowledg that there are ſome, from which they cannot depart, without doing a manifeſt Prejudice to Religion, and to the Salvation of Souls; and that there are alſo others, to which they may adhere without wounding their Conſciences. But there could never yet any Boundaries be agreed on, which ſhould be eſtabliſhed for the right ſetling all People in their proper and natural Limits: Every one would make his own Opinion paſs for Fundamental, and abſolutely neceſſary to Salvation. Whereas had we but well diſtinguiſhed betwixt theſe two ſorts of Doctrines, had we but laid good Foundations to keep theſe Tenets hereafter from being confuſed, this Evil of which we complain, might eaſily be remedied, and all Parties might be Re-united, as I undertake to make appear to you in the Third Part of this Treatiſe.

In the mean time, who does not evidently ſee, that for want of knowing rightly how to diſtinguiſh between theſe two ſorts of Doctrines; the greateſt part of the Diviſions which are amongſt

mongſt Chriſtians, is obſerved to ariſe? How many Queſtions are there, as Unprofitable as Curious, which have made a ſeparation in Mens Judgments? How many Perſons, without ever having examined or underſtood them, have ſided, ſome with one, and ſome with the other, only that they might not be ſuſpected to be without Religion, without Devotion, and without Knowledg? How many Diſputes likewiſe are there which have no other Foundation than certain different Terms and Expreſſions, whilſt all agree in the Subſtances, and make all their Quarrels but about Words? 'Tis certain, that would they examine the Foundation of their Contentions, without Paſſion, and without Prejudice, they would be aſhamed for having loſt ſo much time, and expreſſed ſo much Heat about a thing which merited it not. Every one knows how many Diſputes the ſubject of Grace has cauſed amongſt the *Roman Catholicks*. 'Tis well known with what ardour the Defenders of an Irreſpective Science, which they attributed to God, have maintained their Doctrine againſt thoſe who eſtabliſhed an Abſolute Decree. This was that which formed two Parties amongſt their Doctors: This Difference has continued, and is renewed in our time betwixt the *Janſeniſts* and the *Jeſuits*, although under other terms. There is no Perſon ignorant, unto what a degree of Diviſion they have come about this buſineſs, and the ſtrange Conſequences which are apprehended from it. In the mean time comes a new Doctor, who hath cauſed the Memoires of Grace to be Printed, and maintains that all the Difference is but only in Words. He undertakes to put an end to it, by ſhowing that they all agree in the Foundations, and are all in the ſame mind with St *Auguſtin*, *Fulgentius*, St *Thomas Aquinas*, all the School men, and the Council of *Trent*. If it be ſo, who will not ſuſpect, that the like thing may not poſſibly have happened in many other points, wherein (to our misfortune) different Opinions have made a ſeparation and diviſion.

I place in the rank of Queſtions, which are not eſſential and fundamental in Religion, ſuch as are made about the buſineſs of the Government of the Church, and the Ceremonies inſtituted for ruling the Exteriour part of its Worſhip. For how much ſtir has been made concerning thoſe things, which have no other ground, than the general Rule propoſed by St *Paul*, namely,

That

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That all things be done with Order and Decency in the Church! 'Tis ſufficient therefore, that in theſe Matters, we have always before our Eyes, that which may advance the Glory of God, and edifie his Church. For indeed we may dreſs in a different manner, the proper means for obtaining ſo good an End.

The Uſe and Application of this General Rule, might be left to the Liberty of each particular Church, to do what they ſhould judge moſt Expedient, according to the Circumſtances of the Place, Times, Diſpoſitions of Men's Spirits, and ſuch like. They ſhould only take heed of Introducing in theſe things ſome Practice, which might be directly oppoſite to any of the Eſſential and Fundamental Doctrines. Some require that the Teachers of the Church ſhould be Equal: and others would have a Superiority and Inferiority amongſt them. Some are for an outward Pomp in the Church; and Others would have a great Plainneſs. Some believe that the Ornaments of the Places of Devotion create a Reſpect to the Exerciſe: and Others think that the Meanneſs of the Place takes off the Thoughts of the Faithful from Material and Carnal Things, to lift them upward to Thoſe which are Cœleſtial and Divine. Some love Muſick, and the Sound of Melodious Inſtruments in Divine Service; and Others object, that it diſturbs the Mind, and carries away the Devotion which ſhould be fixt in thoſe Holy Places. Some are of Opinion that the Riches of the Clergy, their Train, and outward Pomp, gains them the Veneration of the People, who are apt otherwiſe to Deſpiſe them: Others judge that the Poverty and Simplicity of the Miniſters of the Church, better accords with the Genius of the Goſpel, and produce more ſaving Effects in the Minds of Men, than all Worldly Splendour.

It is in theſe Kind of Queſtions and Differences, that I ſhall let you ſee, we ſhould bear one with another; for I hold, that there may happen Occaſions, where One of theſe Practices may be moſt Expedient, and moſt Edifying: and Others, or that which is Oppoſite to it, may likewiſe prove of very great Benefit; always provided, that Order and Decency be preſerved: Thus muſt there be a Mutual Toleration amongſt Chriſtians, and a Charitable and Brotherly Support one towards another.

CHAP. III.

That Men have departed from the true Fundamentals of Christian Religion, to take up Others which have nothing of Solidity in them, and which put these Divisions amongst Them.

'TIS a generally received Opinion amongst all Christians, that it is from God alone that we must have the Articles of our Faith, and the Rule of our Actions. They agree also in this, that it is in His Word, contained in the Old and New Testament, that these two things are compriz'd; and that it is from thence, as from Two Fountains, that they must be conveyed down to us. The Councils themselves, namely those which are called General, and to which some Christians do attribute as much Authority and Infallibility, as to the Holy Scriptures, themselves do confirm this Truth. For they have never undertaken to decide any Point of Religion, but by the Holy Scriptures; They have concluded that they ought to ascend up thither for establishing of any Doctrine, which must have Power and Authority amongst Christians. And yet have we departed insensibly from this Principle. We have quitted this saving Tenet, by attributing to Man, that which is not due, but to God alone. We have made such Doctrines as are meerly Humane, to pass crowded amongst those which are handed down to us from God; just as they put off false Money by making it glister as much as may be, and then mixing it amongst such as is currant Coin, that it may not be suspected. This is it that has given Scope to Contentions, and afterwards been the grand Cause of Division.

Some have been of Opinion that whatsoever specious Pretences, and whatsoever plausible Names have been given to the Decisions of the most famous Assemblies, they are all this while but Humane Sentiments, which ought to be examined before they be received. They affirm that they were but particular Men, who have proposed their Opinions in such Assemblies; that many times in these Occasions, 'tis the Credit, Readiness of Wit, and Eloquence,

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Eloquence, or some force of Argument more Specious than Solid, which makes their Opinions pass for Articles of Faith. That those particular Persons who compose these Assemblies may be mistaken, notwithstanding all their Lights and Knowledg; That by consequence, a Company of them, how numerous soever they be, may be subject to Defects, and to the Errours of the Members whereof they are composed. *Lastly*, That the very Diversity or Difference which is sometimes found in the Decisions made by them, justifies enough their Opinion, and makes us see that all these Decisions are subject to Tryal.

Others who are of a different Sence, maintain that without the Decisions of the Councils, we should have but an imperfect Rule of our Belief. That the Holy Scriptures do not comprehend all that which is taught us in the Church. That there are also many things in the Holy Scriptures that have need of Explaining and Interpretation. That on these Occasions there is none to whom we can have better Recourse, than to the Church, to whom God has promised the ordinary Conduct of his Spirit. That the Church cannot make her Voice be better understood, and declare to us her Sence, in a fashion more Authentick, than when she is Represented, and as it were United in these Solemn Assemblies. They are perswaded, that when such an Assembly is lawfully gathered, it does of Right enjoy an Infallibility, equal to that of the Holy Scripture, and that it is God himself, who speaks as much in one as the other.

In the mean time both one and the other, agree in this Point, that the Scripture is Infallible, that it is the Foundation of the Truth, and the soveraign Rule of all Holiness. The latter also pretend, that although they plead in favour of the Authority and Infallibility of the Church, they find Argument enough in the Scriptures for maintaining their Doctrine, and confounding of Errour.

But let us, for the present, lay by this Controversy of the Authority of the Church, and return back to that Principle, which all agree on. It may be, we may draw Rules and Directions enough from thence, so that we should not be obliged to enter upon this other Dispute; which shall be more particularly examined in the Third Part of this Treatise. Let us therefore only hear

hear what *Tertullian* ſays upon this Subject. *Apolog. Chap.* 47. Where giving a Reaſon of the Diviſions which he ſaw in his time about Chriſtian Religion: He ſays, that, *Thoſe who have ſeparated themſelves from the Communion of the Church, have in the doing it, violated their Faith to Jeſus Chriſt; For He it is, that hath taught us the Rule of Truth, which he cauſed to be delivered to us by thoſe holy Men, who had the Happineſs to hear his Word, and receive his Divine Inſtructions; That all which is not Conformable to That Rule, has been invented by new Doctors, who came not till after thoſe bleſſed Diſciples of the Son of God.* In this manner hath this worthy Man aſcended up to the very Fountain Head of this Evil, and diſcovered the Original of thoſe miſerable Diviſions. And St *Auguſtin* in that remarkable Paſſage againſt *Maximin* the *Arrian*, *Let us lay aſide* (ſaid he) *all Prejudices which may conceive, I from the Council of* Nice, *and thou from that of* Arminum *or* Rimini; *Let us, both One and the Other, be guided by the Authority of the Holy Scripture, which is no partial Witneſs, but is as well Common to One, as to the Other.*

Therefore, as when a Man hath once given way to ſome dangerous Principle, what Care ſoever he takes to avoid the ill Conſequences thereof, he is ſure to fall inſenſibly upon them. Likewiſe whatſoever Corrective may be brought for the taking away from the Antimony its malignant Qualities, there ſhall nevertheleſs break forth ſome ill Effects of it. So this Doctrine being once ſettled, that Men muſt be conſulted and followed, concerning Articles of Faith, we give them by little and little an Authority, which appertains only to Him, who is Truth it ſelf. The Conſequence of which is, That we become in a Condition of acquieſcing blindly on whatſoever the Capriſichio's of Men can invent in Matters of Religion. Every one believes himſelf to have as much Right herein, as his Companion; Every one endeavours to make his particular Opinions paſs for Eſſential Truths; Every one condemns as Heretichs, and as People out of the Way of Salvation, all thoſe who do not ſubmit themſelves abſolutely to their Rule: In brief, every one maintains, that there is no true Church, but that which receives the Opinions, which he has promoted, to whom alone belongs the Right of Governing all that which concerns Religion. And although many make a difficulty

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of attributing Infallibility to the Church; nevertheleſs they hold that they ought to ſubmit to theſe Deciſions, at leaſt, if they themſelves cannot paſs for Deciders. All which has much contributed to the forming of Diviſion, and to the fomenting it, after it is kindled.

CHAP. IV.

That the Diſlike which has been had at the Simplicity of Chriſtian Religion, has been an Occaſion, that Men have given it a different Aſpect from that which it had in its beginning.

I Do not believe that there is any Chriſtian, who will not agree with me, that Chriſtianity was never more pure, more Holy, nor more proper to induce its Profeſſors to Vertue, than in its Birth. That was a time wherein the ſaving Principles of the Goſpel, were only received from the Mouth of the Son of God, and from thoſe Holy Men whom he had inſpired. This was the true Golden Age of the Church, abounding in Saints, in Confeſſors, and in Martyrs. And I believe that this Truth will alſo be granted me, that then at that time, when Chriſtian Religion was ſo pure, and exempt from Errour, its Doctrine was alſo moſt Simple and moſt Naked: It was free from all thoſe Subtil Queſtions, which ſome cauſed to be ſtarted up in the ſucceeding Ages. It was not ſubjected to the burthenſom Obſervation of ſo many Ceremonies, which are as ſtrange Habits and Ornaments, wherewith it has been ſince cloathed.

There are found amongſt us two ſorts of Perſons, which have much contributed to this Evil. The Firſt are thoſe ſubtil Spirits, who beſides their own natural Wit, are ſtill more refined in the Schools of the Philoſophers: The Second are ſuch as are pleaſed at ſome Show and Appearance, who have not yet been able to quit the Inclinations, which the World has inſpired them with, for theſe outward things, and who cannot forbear having ſome Eſteem for the Pomp of the *Jewiſh* and *Pagan* Ceremonies.

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The First Sort have thought that Christian Religion would be much more considered, if it should contain many Mysteries, which were obscure and difficult to comprehend; Judging, that as Plainness causes Contempt, Obscurity would gain it Respect and Veneration. They have formed Difficulties upon all the Points of Religion, to exercise their Wits on; And to shew their Skill and Learning, which they bring with them from the Schools, they have caused Doubts to arise from the Things which are most easie and clear. In a word, they have changed the Christian School, into a School of Branglings and Disputes: Which heretofore caused a certain Person to say, That *the Philosophers had been the Patriarchs of the Hereticks.*

The other Spirits, who are for having some Shew in Religion, fancy, that if the Christian Church, were but reduced into the Simplicity which it had in its first Rise, it would have but a Few Followers. They see Men naturally do love that which pleases the Senses, and which conveys Devotion into the Heart, by the Eyes and Ears. It is from this Notion, that all these different Ceremonies are crept in, which we see practised among Christians. They have retained *Jewdaism*, nay more, they have brought in such *Paganism*, as they have deemed most proper, to imprint, by outward Objects, some inward Motives to Devotion and Zeal. They have Imagined that they could with Profit, make use of those Things, which the others abused. They have supposed, that that was the way to Sanctifie the prophane Vessels of the *Egyptians*, and bring back that to its true Use, which nourished the *Pagan* Superstition.

In the mean time, how specious soever the Reasons and Pretences are, which one, and the other alledge in their own Favour; These are they, who have given the first Stroke to the Peace and Union of the Church. For if at first, they had religiously kept themselves to the Small Number of Rules, which the Gospel prescribes us, they had never separated into so many Sects, as have been formed, concerning such Questions as the Curiosity of Men has caused to be raised. *Jesus Christ* tells us, that his Yoke is easie to bear. He invites All, even to the very little Children, to believe in Him; which he would not have done, if the Faith had certainly brought with it all those abstruce Rules and Mysteries,

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ries, which are proposed to us now. The Holy Scriptures do present but very few Doctrines, in comparison of the Exhortations to Virtue, which are there made us. And the Gospel is not given us, but that we should believe *Jesus* to be the *Messias*, and that in believing it, we may have Life through his Name; *Joh.* 20. To be Lawfully Baptized, It is sufficient to believe from the Heart, that *Jesus Christ* is the Son of God, *Acts* 8. Saint *Paul* reduces all his Preaching to this only Point; That *Jesus Christ* is the *Messias*, foretold by the Prophets, that he was to be Crucified, and Rise again from the Dead, *Acts* 17. The same reports, That the Extent of his Knowledge is to know *Jesus Christ*, and Him Crucified. The Epistle to the *Hebrews*, requires not more of him that would approach near to God, than the Knowledge of two Things; That there is One God; And that he is the Rewarder of those who seek after Him. And St *James* makes Pure Religion, and Blameless before God, to consist in Visiting the Widow and Fatherless in their Afflictions; and in keeping themselves from being defiled by this World. As if they would have said, That the Principal Design of Religion is, to bend all ones Study to Sanctity, to Purity, and to Charity.

The Creed of the Apostles, contains whatsoever is Essential in the Rules of Christian Religion, And what that teaches us is sufficient for the Consolation of our Souls, and to induce us to a Holy Life. Let us but examine all the Apologies of the first Christians, written on purpose to discover their Opinions in Religion: They justifie all that which I assert: They comprehend but a very few Articles of Faith, as concerning the Existence of God, the Incarnation of our Lord, his Birth, Life, Death and Resurrection. Hence it is that they have defended themselves from the Accusations which were brought against them; That they have resisted the strongest Temptations, and sustained with Courage the most violent Persecutions. If they had continued in that Course, and had not consulted the Schools of *Plato* and *Aristotle*, concerning the Rules of Religion, there had been no Change made; then had there been no Separation in Christianity. If the Wit of Man had not been Ambitious to mix his own, with the Divine Oracles, the Church would have still been in its Innocency, and in its Purity: such are all these New Opinions, which

being deſtitute of the Evidence of Truth, have ſeparated Mens Spirits, and cauſed this Unhappy Diviſion.

And as to this matter of Ceremonies, and Outward Show of the Church; If they had conſidered them as Simple Ornaments, which are nothing of the Eſſence of Religion; If they had not multiplied them to ſo vaſt a Number; And if herein, they had kept up themſelves to the Simplicity of their Practice in the Primitive Church: They had had no occaſion for any Conteſts concerning theſe Things, and every one might have eaſily found wherewithal to be ſatisfied. But ſince they have without Meaſure, increaſed the Number of Ceremonies; ſo that they have not left Chriſtians the Liberty of making the leaſt Step in Religion, without upholding it by ſome Ceremony: They have put things to a Tryal; Every one has pretended to have a Right to ſpeak his Sence thereof, which has made many to ſeparate, and given occaſion of Diviſion.

CHAP. V.

That many do make uſe of Religion, to ſerve their particular Intereſts, and the Advantages of a Temporal Life.

THE Greateſt Evil which reigns in Society, is, That a right Diſtinction has never been made between the Solid and True Goods; and thoſe which have no Foundation, but in the Imagination of Man. We too often prefer a Worldly Intereſt before all the Advantages of the Soul, and the Hopes of that which is to come. Sometimes alſo after a moſt wicked and deteſtable manner, there are thoſe who make Religion, and an Appearance of Devotion, ſerve for the obtaining or preſerving ſome Temporal and Tranſitory Good. Inſomuch, that as it is from this particular Intereſt, which Contentions do ordinarily ariſe; It muſt not be thought ſtrange, if being mixt in Religion, it cauſes Separation and Diviſion there. Religion is but the ſpecious Pretext which theſe People make uſe of, for advancing their Affairs, and eſtabliſhing their Fortunes in the World. 'Tis no more to them than an Acceſſary to attain to their Principal, which

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is their aggrandizing and making themselves Powerful. And since it is not the Glory of God which they propose to themselves in Religion, we must not wonder, if God permits Discord to ruin a Design, the Motives whereof are so Vile and so Shameful.

When a Religion is once established in a State, the most do not examine whether or no it be well founded in its Rules; and whether it contribute to the Salvation of all, or no. Every one consults whether or no the Profession which is made thereof, may be accommodated to the posture of his own Affairs, and to the subsistence of his Family. The most principal Persons of the State think they ought to maintain it against all others, at what Price soever. They think, that if they should leave to Private Men a Liberty of Examining it, there would happen a great deal of Trouble by the Contradiction of those who might oppose it. So that it is not at all any Pious Motive, which incites them to maintain that Religion which bears the Sway, but an Interest meerly Politique and Worldly. It is not the Advancement of God's Glory, and Defence of the Truth, which they propose to themselves: 'Tis their own Advancement, which they endeavour to manage by the Rules of Humane Prudence; and this Prudence ordinarily suggests to them, not to exercise any but an outward Devotion, for the Attaining of their Ends. Whence it comes to pass that God, curbing this Conduct, permits, in despight of all their Prudence, some Bold Spirits to arise up amongst them, who freely discover their Opinions; daringly publish the Defects of that Religion, which bears so much Sway, make themselves Heads of Factions, and sow Divisions, not only in Religion, but likewise in the State. I leave it to those who have but the least insight into the History of our Times, to make Proof of this Truth, by Examples known to every one.

The Interests of private Persons do not work with less power on their Spirits, than the Interests of a State bustle the Politicians who govern it: And their Passions likewise do not contribute less to these Disorders and Divisions in matters of Religion. How many are there, who coming to establish themselves in a Country, where divers Religions are tolerated, do presently

queſtion which of theſe Religions they ought to follow; whereupon they conſult this kind of Prudence, which obliges them to find out that Profeſſion, which is the probableſt to turn beſt to account. If there be any great Man in the State, and they expect ſome Support or Protection from Him; they take ſpecial care not to throw themſelves into any Communion which their Protector ſhall not approve of. They particularly encline to engage themſelves in the Religion of the Prince, whom they are more afraid of offending, than their own Conſciences.

Others there are likewiſe, who although they ſee one of theſe Communions leſs conſiderable in the State than the other is, by reaſon of its Weakneſs and ſmall Number of Followers, will not yet forbear to liſt themſelves there, meerly for ſome Carnal Intereſt: 'Tis very often Ambition, and the deſire of Rule, which carries them thither; they hope to acquire more Reputation, in having ſome eminent Employment in a ſimple Barge, than if they were thruſt amongſt ordinary Seamen in a great Fleet. They make a large Preamble to theſe of their Party, telling them a fine Story how they are diſintereſſed, and diſengaged of all things that may receive a Temptation, and might make them hope for any Advantage in the World. They declare that they have preferred a Religion abandoned and perſecuted, before one wherein they might have had ſufficient Profits and Advancements; and if they obtain not ſpeedily what they aimed at, they let them know that they are powerfully ſolicited to forſake them, and that their falling off will cauſe a conſiderable Rent amongſt them.

Theſe People draw falſe Concluſions from their falſe Principles, as if Ambition and Self-intereſt did not many times work by occult Ways, and under falſe Pretences; and as though Men travelled not ſometimes to a Vain Glory by back Ways, and to advance their Affairs in the World, under the Maſk of Zeal and Devotion; and theſe are chiefly ſuch as make the greateſt Noiſe in their Society: Theſe are they who are the moſt Zealous in Appearance: They who declaim moſt highly againſt ſuch as do not approve of their Party: Laſtly, Theſe are they, who contribute moſt of all to Diviſion; to ſtrengthen, in favour of it, a Body whereof they would make themſelves Maſters; So that

in the choice of a Religion, Men do ordinarily take that which is clear contrary to the Precept of *Jesus Christ*. They do not, *above all things, seek the Kingdom of God, and the Righteousness thereof:* But they seek every other thing before that which is most important.

We should not only prefer God's Interest and Glory before our Temporal Advantages, but we ought not to desire those very Advantages, but for the Glory of God, and our own Salvation; and leave the whole Disposal thereof to the Providence of Him, who takes particular Care of the least Creatures. These People on the contrary are very inquisitive to know in what way of Worship they may live most commodiously with all their Family; afterwards they inform themselves, and seek about on all sides, by what Means soever to widen their Consciences, that so they may gratify, without Trouble or Remorse, the Passion which rules them.

After that, Judge if these Men (so disposed) are not in a Condition, blindly to follow those, to whom they have joyned themselves: If they who move not, but by such ill Principles, are not capable of being made Subject to whatsoever shall be desired of them, to advance their own Society, and ruin others. Hence it is that all those dangerous Prejudices do arise, which are in Religion, like a thick Cloud, that obscures the Understanding. This it is, that hinders us from discovering the Truth, and from working by the Motives of a sincere Charity. After once a particular Interest hath taken place in our Spirits, it excludes all others from thence. It cannot suffer any Concurrent; and, if we be sometimes obliged to take in any other Interests, it is but upon Condition, that they shall be subject to that which was first seated in our Hearts and Affections.

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Christian Reconciler.

PART III.

Of the proper Means to Re-unite all Christians into one sole Communion.

CHAP. I.

Of the ill Meanes which has been made use of hitherto for putting a Remedy to the Evil of this Division.

AFter having considered the Nature of this Evil, whereof we have undertaken the Cure; After having made known the Extent, the Depth, and the Consequences; found out the Causes, and traced them up to their very Source; Order directs us to come to the Remedies which are requisite to the curing thereof. But before we propose them, it will not be at all from the Purpose, to say something of Those which hitherto have been Unprofitably employed therein. And I do not wonder

wonder that we could never yet see any Success of whatsoever has been done, for stopping the course of so great Disorder. Men have always built upon this wrong Foundation, that this Evil was of it self Incureable, and that therefore they could only study how they might stop the course of its most pernicious Symptoms. They have believed it was but like going about to save a Sick Persons Life, that was given over by the Physicians. They never thought of a Means of reducing all the Societies of Christians into One. They have imagined that the Difference of their Opinions was too Great, and concerning Matters too Important ever to bring it about, that all the Ends should be made to meet together. They have fancied that the Alienation of Mens Minds was too Inveterate, the Prejudices too many, and the Interests too different and too deeply rooted, reasonably to hope, that either One, or other, would make the first Advance towards such an Agreement. Insomuch that Every one has supposed it was enough for him to strengthen himself in his Opinions, and to establish them by good Reasons, and to weaken those which are opposite to them, that they may draw to their Sides, such as should reject them.

It is on this Foundation, that all those have hitherto worked, to whom God has bestowed any great Talents, and who have had any Name in Divinity. All these Disputes, Conferences, and Volumes of Controversies are not employed, but to this End, namely, To maintain the Doctrine, which they have embraced, and to induce others to the receiving of it.

But in this, all these Great Inconveniences have never been considered; That those very same who write, and who dispute with so much Heat and Subtilty, are many times as much byassed as others, and their Passions are as Violent as those in vulgar Persons; That oft times they alledge on both Sides very Specious Reasons, and such as cause new Difficulties to arise, of which they cannot easily clear themselves; That all Private Persons have not the Time, and Conveniences requisite, to be able to read over these kind of Writings, and hear these Disputes; That of those likewise who are in a Condition to apply themselves hereto, there are but few who bring not some Strong Conceipts in Favour of those Opinions, which they have followed before

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before. Insomuch that on these Occasions, we see but few, who give not all the Applause to the Doctors of their Communion, and esteem not the Others, but as confuted and baffled Teachers. So as I dare boldly say, that all these Writings, and all these Disputes, being far off from producing any good Effects, shall but cause the Minds of Men to be more wedded to their Opinions, and remove them further off from any Sincere Reconciliation. Let us say then with St *Augustine*, *Epist.* 122. That this Evil has more need of Tears, and Lamenting, than of large Writings and great Volumns. And many times the Discourses which have been us'd for obliging the vanquished to follow another Profession, have served but still more to animate the Parties, and fortifie them in their Separation.

Therefore many seeing the small Success of this Remedy, which has been endeavoured, have judged that they ought to change their Method, and work the Cure after another way. For effecting of which, they have distinguished between such Societies of Christians, whom they have believed to have gross and dangerous Opinions; and others whom they supposed not to lye in so great Errour. As to the first, they have given them over as Sick Persons, in so deplorable a Condition, that their Disease is stronger than all Remedies: But they have made some Steps towards the Assistance of the latter; They have offered them a Hand of Reconciliation, and made them hope to meet together, in certain Terms and Expressions, whereon they should agree.

This is it, that all those have endeavoured, who have hitherto applyed themselves to the Re-uniting of the Catholicks, and Protestants. This is the way which they have followed, who would have agreed the *Lutherans* with the *Calvinists*, and These again with the *Arminians*, and Others who are gone out of their Communion. And yet after a World of Trouble, and Writings composed on this Subject, these Designs have proved abortive, and these Essays unprofitable. For not to say any thing of the Distinction which they make between pernicious Doctrines, and those which are not so, (which is only contriv'd by their own Sentiments, and whereby they are already pre-engaged.) Is it not true, (as I have observed in the Preface,) that they are particular Interests that have slipt in, and diverted the Blessing of

God, from a Deſign, where another End was purſu'd, than that of his Glory? As alſo that they have rather endeavoured herein to lull aſleep, and give ſome kind of preſent Eaſe to this Evil, than to Cure it perfectly by any effectual Remedy.

There has been made a certain Mixture of Doctrines, and a Compoſition of Things which can never be Incorporated together; whereas they ought to have laboured to purifie Chriſtian Religion, and ſeparate it from that Mixture of all Strange things, and bring it back to its firſt Simplicity. Indeed they have failed herein, for want of looking up to the Fountain-Head of this Evil, to diſcover what firſt made this Separation among Chriſtians, of what Communion ſoever they be. We ought therefore, ſince it is ſo, to find out a Means how to propound to all Chriſtians in general, ſomething wherewith to ſatisfie them in the Overtures which ſhall be made them, and cauſe them all to underſtand the Intereſt which they have to Re-unite themſelves into one and the ſame Principle.

In ſhort, Some there are who have fancied, that Councils, and General Aſſemblies might put a good Period to this Evil, by their Authority, and great Learning; but many times Intereſts and prejudicate Opinions reign as well in theſe Aſſemblies, as amongſt the particular Perſons which compoſe them. For we ordinarily ſee, that theſe kind of Companies make Mens Spirits more obſtinate in their firſt Sentiments, and cauſe a leſs Diſpoſition in them to an Agreement. We ſee beſides, that theſe ſame Aſſemblies are very ſeldom formed, but under the Authority of one of the Sects of Chriſtians, and that whatſoever is propoſed therein, is to Fortifie them the more againſt others, and to fix them more and more in their firſt Opinions. This is that which has cauſed many abſolutely to reject all Aſſemblies of this Kind, and has been the Ground of that common Saying, that *Every General Council begets a War*. Therefore for the Right Management of this Deſign, all Chriſtians generally ſhould agree together upon all things which regard their common Good; they ſhould all work upon the ſame Principle; and if they convene any Aſſembly for the attaining to ſo good an End, no Chriſtian Society ſhould be ſuffered to prevail by its Authority, and Power over the reſt: But all ſhould have the Liberty of propoſing their Opinions, to

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be afterwards determined by that which ſhall be for the Common Good.

CHAP. II.

The Firſt Means.

To lay aſide all Prejudices againſt Others, and to throw off all Particular Intereſts, that ſo nothing may be propoſed by us, but the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Souls.

WE have already ſhewn, that there is nothing ruins more the Peace of the Church, than the Intereſt of Particular Perſons. That the greateſt Obſtruction to this Re-union, is our Prejudice againſt other Societies, which in time ſtrengthens our pre-conceived Opinions. Therefore what we ſhould do out of hand for the Succeſsful carrying on of this good Deſign, is, to caſt off all particular Intereſts, and all theſe Prejudices; I mean, not to own any, but the true and lawful Intereſts, that all of us may meet in one Point, which is that of the Glory of God, our own Salvation, and the Good of thoſe with whom we deſire to be rejoyned. And it is farther requiſite, to lay aſide all thoſe Prepoſſeſſions of Spirit, which may render us leſs inclinable to thoſe Propoſitions of Peace, that may be offered us. And I am perſwaded, that were we free from ſuch Pre-engagements and Prejudices, we ſhould favourably hearken to all Overtures of Reconciliation which ſhould be made us.

As for the Lawful Intereſts which I ſpeak of, and are fit to be propoſed in this Affair, they are ſuch as have no Regard to any Imaginary Good, but are Real, Solid, and Eſſential to Man. Alſo this ſame Good is never ſeparated from the Intereſts of the Glory of God, and the Eſtabliſhment of Truth.

I exclude therefore out of the Rank of Right Motives, which ſhould guide us in the Search of the True Chriſtianity: Firſt of all, whatſoever has relation to the Advantages and Commodities of the preſent Life. I put into this Number thoſe which reſpect

Honours, Riches, Pleaſures, and whatſoever is the Object of any Carnal Deſire. And hither I alſo refer whatſoever contributes to the ſatisfaction of our inordinate Paſſions, where they revolt from the Obedience which they owe to Reaſon. I am certain that this Principle will be approved by every one: There is no Man who will not confeſs that things ſo different can never be match'd together. All will agree in this General *Theſis*, that, As there is no Union betwixt Light and Darkneſs, ſo we cannot joyn the ſtrict Holineſs of the Celeſtial Doctrine, with the Impure Liberty of our Paſſions.

But there often ſlip in certain particular Intereſts, the which being more Secret, and ſuch as paſs more dexterouſly under the Favour of ſome Specious Pretence, are not yet leſs prejudicial to the Peace of the Church. Such is an Inconſiderate and Turbulent Zeal in Men, which becauſe it ſeems exempt from thoſe other groſs Intereſts, of which we have been ſpeaking, they appear as though they had only Piety for their Rule and Meaſure in all their Motions. 'Tis for the moſt part obſerved, that this Zeal is nothing but a meer Obſtinacy and Self-conceitedneſs, which can never depart from that which it hath once received. This Intereſt, which ordinarily ariſes either from Ignorance, from an Inveterate Cuſtom, or from ſome other ſuch Motive, engages us ſo much the more in Diviſion, by how much it is covered with the Appearance of Devotion. And I am perſwaded that many of thoſe who read this Part, if they conſider it with themſelves, will confeſs that I touch upon a String, which though ſmall, yet is not at all the leſs Intelligible.

To theſe apparent Intereſts, I joyn thoſe of ſome particular Perſons, who being willing to paſs for ſworn Enemies of Inconſtancy, and Levity, perſevere in the Profeſſion which they have followed from their Infancy. They call it Rathneſs and Inadvertence, to depart ſo readily from thoſe Tenets in Religion, which they firſt embraced; and they hold, that before they can do it, they muſt be fully convinced of the falſeneſs thereof, and the Evident Peril which they incur by retaining them. Wherefore ſo long as they find any Appearance, or Probability, they cannot believe it ſtands with their Prudence to abandon them. I have known ſome of theſe, who have been ſo ſtrongly pre-poſſeſſed

ſeſſed with this Opinion, that they could not forbear ſhewing a leſs Eſteem of ſuch as had embraced their Sentiments, than of thoſe who had ſtill perſiſted in the contrary Party.

To theſe ſpecious Intereſts I muſt yet add one more, and that is a Diſpoſition of Spirit, which we find many to have, who being entred into a Communion, believe it would be a Shameful Thing, ſhould it be ſaid of them, that they have examined their Religion too Late. They imagine, that ſhould they confeſs they have continu'd in an Errour to theſe Years, and that they had never in all this time perceived the weakneſs of their former Profeſſion, People would take all the reſt to be want of Diſcretion, Irreligion, and Impiety. To flatter themſelves herein, they endeavour to make ſome kind of Superficial Conſideration, which they have made of the Rules of their Sect, paſs for an exact and profound Search into the Reaſons of their Belief. After which, they maintain it with Confidence, as not at all doubting, but that they are in the right Way.

There are ſome Others, who are directly Oppoſite to thoſe, of whom I have now been ſpeaking: Theſe are ſuch as are Inconſtant, and bid Defiance to whatſoever they have formerly believed; who imagine that all new Opinions, which are propoſed to them, are far better than thoſe wherein they have been brought up. They are like thoſe of whom an Ancient ſays, that out of Fear, they make all their Prudence conſiſt in following every other Councel, but their own. So theſe timorous Spirits in Religion, embrace the firſt Opinions which are propounded to them, and prefer always new Doctrines, above thoſe which were received before. We ſhould therefore check all theſe bad Inclinations, which Nature, Education, Age, Ignorance, and Example may give us: For whilſt we liſten to any one of theſe Voices, we ſhall be but in an ill Condition to entertain the Propoſitions of an Agreement. All theſe Propoſitions will at the firſt Inſtant appear Suſpicious to us, and at laſt we ſhall reject them abſolutely.

After this, to do well, we muſt caſt away from us all theſe unhappy Prejudices againſt others, and High Conceipts of our own Opinions, which cauſe almoſt all the Diſorders that ordinarily happen in the Church. Theſe are ſo many Clouds which darken the Underſtanding, and hinder Men from ſeeing diſtinctly the Objects,

jects, upon which they ſhould make their judgment. They are painted Glaſſes, which repreſent to us all we look on, the clear contrary way, as dyed with their own colour. How would you have a Man, whoſe Spirit is filled with an infinite number of Ideas, upon which he is already fixed, be able, after this, to make room for thoſe which are Oppoſite to them, although they are really more effectual to his Salvation? They muſt be all excluded to compare them together without Prejudice; they muſt be ſeen Naked, and that held, which ſhall be judged moſt Reaſonable.

There has been not long ſince propoſed, in Philoſophy, an excellent way of right Diſputing, and keeping a direct Courſe for ſearching out the Truth. They ſay, that for effecting of this, all pre-conceived Opinions, and Pre-poſſeſſions of Spirit muſt be abſolutely caſt away. That then they muſt not take up any, but the moſt plain Notions, and ſuch Propoſitions as cannot be quarrelled at by any who have the leaſt uſe of Reaſon. Why then cannot we imitate this manner of procedure in Religion? Can we not for a while ſet aſide all theſe Opinions, which we defended heretofore with ſo much Eagerneſs and Heat, to examine them afterwards more freely, and without any Paſſion, holding cloſely to our common Principle which is the Holy Scripture? Can we not without any Prejudice look upon the Foundations of Religion, which all they who are called Chriſtians do generally acknowledg, and the Principles which they all agree upon? Would it not be an infallible means to know with a diſintereſted Mind, how we ſhould advance in a right way, and how we might build upon a ſolid Foundation, and ſuch as ſhould be approved by every one?

My deſire therefore is, that theſe Prejudices and ſtrong Fancies of our own Opinions may be quitted, which bind us in a Religion, rather by falſe Appearances, than by Judgment and Reaſon. Hence is it that ſome boaſt of their Antiquity, the Succeſſion of their Paſtors, the Government of their Communion, their Temporal Advantages, the Riches, Splendour and Magnificence of their Temples, and Ornaments. Hence is it that others glory in their Plainneſs, and the Smalneſs of their Number, the Contempt which is made of them in Society, and other things of this Nature

Nature, which the World cannot relish. Lastly, there are others extolling the Knowledg and Talents of their Doctors; the Sanctity, Austerity and Mortifications of their Votaries, the Zeal of their Martyrs, and other Exteriour Things, and Accidentals to Religion. For it may so happen, that all these may meet in Societies, which are not approved of by those, who boast of them, as so many Titles in their Favour.

There are likewise some, who, although they seem not to regard any thing, but Religion, by putting away whatsoever is not Essential to it, yet cannot forbear falling into Prejudices and Errours of dangerour Consequence. Such are those who believe that their Doctrine is to be preferred before others, by reason of the Number of the Learned Men which defend it, the Arguments with which they appear to be supported, and the Great Motions of Virtue which they seem to inspire. They consider not that all these things may be also observed in the Societies, whose Doctrine they do not approve: That at least the Followers of the Rest might make a like Judgment of their Doctrine; seeing the Friends of each of them are pre-possessed with Reasons in favour of their Own.

We ought therefore for a while to cast off all these particular Sentiments, which form the divers Societies of Christians; in such manner, that it should not be the Authority of any One amongst them, that should bear sway over the Rest; but the sole Infallible Rule of Truth, which is the Word of God: For, seeing That is universally received by all Christians, there ought to be no difficulty, in submitting to whatsoever it clearly teaches us. This being so, how can we doubt of the Blessing of God, upon such an Enterprize, since we have no other thing for our Interest, than his Glory; for our Rule, than his Word; and for our End, than our Salvation.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

The Second Means.

That we ſhould not have for our Direction, more than One known and general approved Rule, for all Chriſtians to walk by.

WHen we ſay, that for the attaining to a perfect Re-union, we muſt be free from all obſtinate Prejudices; I mean not thereby, the eſtabliſhing of an Indifference, and leaving Mens minds in a Suſpence, without knowing what to reſolve on. 'Tis only to render many unſure Foundations, ſuſpected, and to ſearch out for One which may be Firm and Solid, and which the whole World ſhould agree to be ſo. Now there is but One of this Nature, and that is the Sacred Word of God, which he hath given us by the Miniſtry of his Servants. He hath given it us expreſly to be the Rule, both of our Faith, and all our Actions, in what concerns his Service.

And it is too evident that all do not agree on Other Matters. All do not hold that the Church is Infallible. All do not acknowledg, that there is an Unwritten Word, which is of as much Authority, as that which is the Writings of the Prophets and Apoſtles. All do not pretend that we muſt be guided by that, which the Holy Ghoſt ſhall dictate, by his Secret Motions in the Hearts of the Faithful. But all Chriſtians, without exception, hold, that God ſpeaking to us in his Holy Word, muſt be Harkened to, and that we muſt Obey him without any Reſtriction. If, beſides this, there ſhall be found any Confeſſion of Faith, which has been drawn from the Holy Scriptures, and drawn in ſuch a manner, as that it retains a Doctrine ſo pure, that all Chriſtians may ſecurely receive it: It may very well be joyned with this Word, delivered to us from God. And ſuch, in my Opinion, is the Apoſtles Creed: there never having been hitherto,

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as I have ever heard, any Christian who denyed to entertain it, as being an Extract and Compendium of the Gospel. And, if that had been well practised, which the Council of *Chalcedon* enjoyned, of not adding any other Doctrine to this Symbole, we had never seen Christianity divided into so many Sects, as at present it is.

I shall not here undertake to prove the Divinity of this Holy Writing; as having now only to do with Christians, who all acknowledge it. This is a thing that I may possibly handle in the third Treatise, which I have promised to publish, in the Preface to this Piece. For my Design therein is, to let all People of the World see the Advantages of the Christian Religion above others: I shall also there endeavour to give to every one, a Means of looking into it without these obstinate Prejudices, which would certainly make us reject any Doctrine, how tending soever to our Salvation.

At the present, me-thinks, for the working with Success towards a good Re-union, we should rise to a Principle wherein we all agree; It would be a very good Step towards a Peace, when we should find a Subject wherein we could all Unite. For, according to that Universal Maxim, Things which agree in a Third, agree also together. If therefore we all receive the Word of God, as our Soveraign Rule; might we not probably hope, that we may be Re-united in other things, which are but Dependances on that; especially, if after we have cast away from us all our Passions, and prejudicate Opinions, we bring only with us a true Zeal, and an ardent Charity? Moreover, being perswaded that the Doctrine contained in these Holy Scriptures is Divine, that it is True, that it is Infallible, and that it is perfectly Holy, we shall without doubt conclude, that it is our Soveraign Rule: That it prescribes to us what we should All believe, and receive for our Salvation. And as this Word expresly forbids us to Add, Diminish, or Alter any thing in the Doctrine which it lays open to us, we should look upon all other Doctrines received in any other Society of Christians, as very Suspicious: We should not receive them, till after a careful Examination of them, and upon Sure Conditions, how Specious soever the Pretences were, under which they would make them to pass to us.

Although they ſhould give them to us meerly as Explications, Illuſtrations, and Conſequences drawn from this Word: We ſhould however look upon them, but as Eſſays of Man's Wit, whoſe Infirmity appears in all his Actions. All his Meditations, his Application, his Reaſoning, his Humility, his Prayers, and his Faſtings, cannot hinder, but that there will remain ſtill great Weakneſſes of Fleſh, which will render him lyable to Contempt and Errour. There is none but God only who is able to declare to Us the things which are of God; becauſe there is none but God who knows God; as an Excellent Author of our times has very well expreſſed. What Men ſay of Him, is but Babbling; Whatſoever they bring thither of their own, is but weak and doubtful. *De divinis, etiam vera dicere, periculoſum eſt.* we muſt go to the very Truth it ſelf, and aſcend up to the Fountain-Head. We muſt ſuſpect all the Waters which have not paſſed through this Channel, although they appear never ſo Excellent.

Oh! that we had but made known, with a little Diligence amongſt Chriſtians, the Value of this important Principle, as we have ſown the Seeds of Diviſion; that we had avoided unprofitable Queſtions and Diſputes; and had made Chriſtian Religion eaſie and intelligible, as carefully as Particular Doctors have taken upon them the liberty of Expounding the Scripture; Every one giving it the Sence which his *Genius*, or rather his Capricious Fancy, or Intereſt ſuggeſted to him: Every one having drawn the Conſequences from it, which moſt favour his Inclinations: Nay, and without ſticking there, every one has endeavoured to give to theſe Conſequences an Authority equal to that of the Original, from whence he pretends to have drawn them. In this very manner have we ſeen Diſputes and Contentions ariſe, alſo Hereſies, Schiſms, Diviſions, and different Communions. Every Society has made his particular Confeſſion, which they pretend ought to be of as great Authority, as the very Creed of the Apoſtles themſelves. And thus, as this Practice has ſtrengthened it ſelf in the Church, after the ſame rate alſo has Diviſion been ſtrengthened and augmented. It is therefore abſolutely neceſſary for the eſtabliſhing a good Peace in the Church, to reject all Inventions of Men, and not to lend an Ear, but to God only, ſpeaking

ſpeaking in his Word. It is thus, that the great Perſons have practiſed, who lived in the moſt pure Age of the Church. They have ever confined their Minds to the Holy Scriptures, as to the only Foundation of our Faith, and of our Salvation.

CHAP. IV.

The Third Means.

Rightly to diſtinguiſh between the Doctrines, which the Holy Scriptures propoſe to be believed by True Chriſtians; and what Regards only the Outward Government of the Church, and its Ceremonies.

THis Sacred Word, which we have ſaid is the only Foundation of the Churches Subſiſtence, and of the Union of its Members, offers three Sorts of Things to be learnt by us. It declares, Firſt, what we are to believe, for the Peace of our Conſciences, and for obtaining Salvation, and Eternal Life. It teaches us next, what relates to the Government of the Church, in the Exerciſe of its Diſcipline, and in the outward Practice of its Ceremonies. And Laſtly, it gives us ſaving Precepts, which ſerve for the Direction of our Lives, and Manners; Not only to be the outward Guide of our Actions, and of our Words: But alſo of our Affections, Inclinations, and moſt ſecret Motions of our Souls. This Diſtinction being well eſtabliſhed, and all its Members truly conſidered: We ſhall find that in the right Management hereof, there will be no occaſion of quarrelling, unleſs it be about the Rules propoſed to our Faith, For as to what concerns the Precepts of Virtue, they are ſo clearly laid open in the Holy Scriptures, that in them there can be no ground for Controverſie.

All Chriſtians know, that God will be moſt highly loved and adored. All agree, that we muſt honour Father and Mother, according to the Commandment of God. All accord in this Point, that the Law of God forbids Murder, Adultery, Lying, &c.

All acknowledge that these Laws are not meerly established to Rule the outward Form of Men in Society; but that they oblige us to conform the most secret Thoughts and Inclinations of our Hearts, to the Purity and Sanctity which they command. After this we need not any other Rule, than that Abridgment of the Law, which the Son of God has reduced to these two admirable Precepts; To love God with all our Affections; and our Neighbour as Our selves. The Observation which might be made from hence, would Rule, as every one may perceive, all our Actions; Insomuch that no Person could desire any thing more for the living Holily, and Justly.

I know very well that there have been certain Doctors formerly amongst Christians, who by their Interpretations have gone aside from the strict observation of these Laws: But they have not only wanted the Approbation of others, as well of their own Communion, as Strangers: but also they themselves have always made Profession of acquiescing, as others, in these Sacred and Inviolable Rules. They did not pretend to weaken them by their Interpretations; they only sooth'd Men's Consciences with a favourable Sence, which they give to the Circumstances of particular Actions. Behold here one of the principal Articles of Faith; Nay, I dare say, the most Important, and wherein consists the very Essence of Religion, which can give no Cause of Division.

As to the Rules which the Holy Scriptures afford us for the Government of the Church, relating to its Discipline, and to its Ceremonies: 'Tis a strange thing that they should have so often given occasion of Disputes, and been the cause of Separation and Division. If the Holy Pen-men had punctually prescribed, and ordered every thing that ought to be done in this Matter; we should be obliged indispensibly to observe them: And we should have reason to separate our selves from those, who did depart from them. But seeing that this Sacred Word is contented to give us, for this purpose, certain General Precepts: For Saint *Paul* plainly tells us, that *These things must be done with Order and Decency*. Liberty is given without doubt to Christians, to dispose of these, according as they shall think convenient, having regard to the circumstances of Places, of Times, and of Persons, in keeping

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keeping always within the Bounds of Decency, and Order. For, beſides, that the Scripture has thus declared it ſelf hereupon: The Nature of the Thing ſeems palpably to lead us to the ſame.

There is no Body, who does not put a great difference between that which is Eſſential to a thing, and that which is meerly Accidental. All acknowledge, it is on the preſervation of the Firſt, that the ſubſiſtence of its Subject does abſolutely depend; that it can be very well maintained without the Second, and that alſo more conveniently. Likewiſe that we ſhould act quite otherwiſe for the Firſt, than we ſhould for the Other. So, to preſerve Health, or to recover it, though we ſtrictly obſerve the Diet which is abſolutely requiſite, we can freely and without prejudice, change the Reliſhes and Tinctures, which we give to the Food, and to the Medicines.

This being once well ſettled, every one ſees how unreaſonable a thing it would be, to ſeparate about the occaſion of any Difference, which might happen in Outward Matters, and Accidentals to Religion. Should there be any Schiſm in the Church concerning the Order which is to be amongſt its Governours? Muſt this Holy Union be broken, becauſe ſome would have the Church be governed by Biſhops, and others would have an Equality amongſt its Paſtors? Muſt we, becauſe of ſome diverſity in the Habits of thoſe who officiate in the Church, break the Knot which ſhould tye all Chriſtians together? Is it juſt that for the Ornaments of the Temples, the Poſtures wherein private Perſons ſhould be, during the Acts of Devotion, and other ſuch Ceremonies, the Peace of the Church ſhould be ruined, and the Unity of its Members? Has not the Primitive Church made it well appear, that there was no ſuch matter of Scrupie, when it freely changed the Practice, according as the Times and Occaſions required it? Did not *Tertullian*, one of its principal Doctors, teach us, that the Rule of Faith continuing firm and conſtant, other things which regard the Diſcipline, do ſometimes ſuffer alterations and Changes? Were the Temples always ſet out in this Magnificence, which they are in at preſent among Chriſtians? Were Faſtings always after the ſame manner obſerved? Were the Garments of Miniſters of the Church always in the ſame Mode?

mode? Have they at all Times, and in all Places received the Holy Eucharist after the same fashion, as to their outward Gestures? Has there not always been great Diversity in the Practice of these things, and can we not still be able to suffer it, without being forced to Separate and Dis-member the Church, as we do at this present time?

I confess that in certain Ceremonies, some things may fall out to be practised, which would directly oppose to the Fundamental Points of Religion. But it would be easie to give a Remedy to this Evil, following the Order which I shall propose. We should in this case, look back to the very Precept it self, upon which we should all agree together; For if we all accord in what concerns the Doctrine, we shall find no great difficulty to accord, or at least to maintain a charitable Judgment in the Use of the Ceremony. If we were once but well Re-united together, in the Opinions which we should have of the Doctrine, I am assured, that we should bear with one another, in things which are not of that importance. If we joyned in the Main Essential Matters, the Accessories would not easily separate us.

Behold then, how this happy meanes of Peace must be ordered It is by establishing immediately, with great care, the Pounds which are to be given to these two things; That is, First, that a right Distinction be made between what serves for the outward conduct of the Actions of true Believers, and the Essence and internal Concern of a good Christian: Next, that we labour and seek out by all the ways imaginable, how we may be Re-united in what respects the Essence of Christianity. But for that which respects the outward Government, and the Ceremonies of the Church, some Liberty should be given to the particular Societies of Christians. Herein regard must be had to the difference of Places and Climates, where they dwell, which often create more disgust to one sort of Government, than to another. Also their should be considered the diversity of their Politique Government, which may imprint some stamps of its Character upon that of the Church. Lastly, We should likewise have in consideration, what these Societies may have practised hitherto, with success in this respect and leave them the entire disposal thereof, after having represented to them what shall be judged more

more profitable and more commodious for them.

This Diverſity muſt not alter the Peace of the Church. It is not juſt, that agreeing together in the eſſential Points, we ſhould break the Bonds of our Amity, for things which are not eſſential. How many Brothers are there, who although they be of different Employments, yet for all this leave not off their living together as Brothers, and making up one and the ſame Family. I would therefore have an Accomodation made herein, according to the Cuſtoms and Practices of the Places in which they live. That in all parts, where they ſhould Inhabit and Sojourn, they might be ſubject to the Community of Chriſtians, which ſhould be there eſtabliſhed, without Condemning or Blaming other Cuſtoms. That we ſhould rather believe charitably, that every one has followed herein the Order which has been ſuppoſed to be moſt convenient, and moſt requiſit to Salvation; ſeeing that ſtill the Principle which is comprehended in few Articles, continues firm.

Thus St *Paul* was accuſtomed to do, 1 *Cor.* 10. 33. *Endeavouring to pleaſe, and accommodate all matters, without ſeeking after particular Conveniences, but only the Salvation of many.* And when he ſaw any who would be Contentious in theſe things, He only anſwered them thus, 1 *Cor.* 11. 16. *We have no ſuch Cuſtom.* Showing that it argues a Contentious Spirit, and an Enemy to the Peace of the Church, to be unwilling to follow Order and Cuſtom in things of this Nature. We ſhould always fix here, That we ought not, barely upon account of human Inſtitutions, to ſeparate one from another, ſeeing we break with thoſe, who embrace the ſame Doctrine which we do, clearly taught us in the Word of God, under pretence that they have not the ſame Practice with us in the outward part of Religion.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

The Fourth Meanes.

To distinguish between that which the Scripture proposes to us to believe, as Doctrine of Salvation: that which it delivers to us, as Histories of things which have happened: and that which it reports to us, as Predictions of Things to come.

FOllowing the distinction made in the foregoing Chapter, of all the things which are proposed to us in the Holy Scripture: We must first examine what it declares to us, as Truths, which the true Believer ought to receive by Faith. These are not all of a like Nature; and must also be carefully distinguished, to take away likewise all cause of Contention among Christians. I believe, therefore, they may all be brought under these three Heads. As first, the Mysteries of Religion, which ought to be believed, for setting the Conscience at rest, & procuring its Salvation; Secondly, the Historical Narrations which the Scripture makes us, of many things that have happened, as well in the Disposition of the Order of the Universe, as in the Government of the Church, under the Old and New Covenant. Thirdly, the Predictions there made, as of things which must happen, and whereof we see not yet the Accomplishment. This being concluded, we should generally receive as unquestionable Truths, whatsoever God has revealed to us in his Word. Wherein there are many things which should not, neither can they give any matter of Contention, much less of Division.

As for Example, the Historical Relations of the Holy Scriptures are such, that all Christians generally receive them, as Certain and Indubitable; and if there be any diversity of Opinions upon any difficulties of Chronology; That should not cause a Separation in the Church; The Opinions may be left to the Liberty of particular Persons, to follow therein, what they shall judge most

most probable. I say the same of Interpretations that may be given to some obscure passages, which should not cause any Division, be the diversity never so great, which is there met with. There is but one sole occasion for allowing it, and that is, When a particular Interpretation overthrows some one of the Fundamental Doctrines, or that they would make it to pass, as issued out from the very Mouth of God himself. For all these Interpretations are but so many attemps of Mans Wit, which may fail: Insomuch that we should leave to every one the liberty of examining them, to receive them afterwards, or reject them without Prejudice to Salvation, and without breaking the Union, which is had with those of contrary Opinions.

As to what concerns future Predictions, neither ought These to be the subject of any Division. It may suffice, we are all in general perswaded, that whatsoever has been foretold, in the Holy Scriptures, shall have its Accomplishment, notwithstanding all the Obstacles which interfere. 'Tis sufficient to believe, that the first Cause absolutely disposing of second Causes will bring about its Designs, in despite of all resistance of the Creatures. This hinders not from advancing our Thoughts higher, searching into the Sence of the Prophesie, and making our Conjectures of the times of its Execution. We should in this give Liberty to certain particular Persons, especially when these kinds of Meditations may contribute to the Consolation of true Believers, and to excite them more to Sanctity. It is in this, I make that happiness consist, which the Book of the Apocalypse attributes to those who reads it carefully and understand it. But he who would apply himself to this Study, must not do it, but with great Precautions. Here it is, that much Strictness must be observed, and principally not the least stirring be made, but from a principle of deep Humility. He must on all occasions distrust himself, but more in this, then any other. For although these Oracles be not conceived in Ambiguous Terms, as those of the *Pagans* were: Yet are they proposed in Obscure and Dark Expressions; They are such hidden Mysteries, and so profound, that they can scarcely be fathomed.

When Predictions are accomplished, they change their Nature, and become Histories easie to be understood: But before the E-

vent they must be looked upon with that profound Respect, as causes naturally a Silence. But yet if any think they have espy'd some Light, they may utter their Thought with modesty; and should rather propose it as a Conjuncture, than as a certain Doctrine. For truly there is nothing so dangerous, nor so prejudicial to the Peace of the Church, as the desire of making pass our Sense upon Things foretold, for constant Truths. There needs but a forc'd Opinion of these Prophesies, to stir up a whole Nation to tumult, to disturb the Peace of States, and ruin the Unity which should be amongst Christians. The Examples of this, are as well known, as they are Dreadful to Consider. There might some kind of Parallel be made between this Reflection, and those dangerous obstinate Opinions, whereof we have already made mention, and which must be entirely cast away, to attain to a perfect Intelligence in Christianity.

CHAP. VI.

Fifth Advice.

Touching the Mysteries of Christian Religion, which we must believe, as being Revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and concerning the Distinction which must be made of them.

After having considered methodically, of what the Word of God teaches us, touching the Rites, Ceremonies, and outward Order of the Church, as also the Histories and Prophesies which it contains; After having shown that in all these things there should be no matter of Contention among Christians: I have nothing left to examine, but what concerns the Rules comprehending the Holy Mysteries of Christianity, which Believers should own and receive for their Salvation. And because it is a most important Matter, it must be clearly open'd, and explained, to remove whatsoever might give any occasion of Contention, and procure herein, as well as in the rest, a Reconciliation of all Christian Societies.

I

I cannot now absolutely disapprove the Distinction, which all Doctors make in this matter, and of which I have already spoken. If I acknowledg there be in Religion some important Precepts, Essential, Fundamental, and necessary to Salvation; I acknowledg therein also others, less important, which might be let alone, as where some Error may slip in; Yet this may be done without prejudicing our Salvation, the Peace of Consciences, and Tranquility of the Church. But what I cannot approve of in this, is the Application which these Doctors make of this Distinction, to their Cause. They commonly fall, concerning this matter, into the same Faults which have been observed; Namely, their prejudicate Opinions, and particular Interests, which for the most part bare sway in the Judgment, which they make of what is Fundamental, and what is not. So that they would oblige all, who enter into their Communion, to acquiesce in Humane Doctrines, as if they were so many Fundamental Ponits. They oblige Men also to Reject the Doctrines which agree not with theirs, as if they tended to overthrow the Foundations of Religion, although they may not be so prejudicial, as they would make them believe. For who has Authority of fixing that which is Fundamental, and distinguishing it from that which is not? If it were left to the disposition of Men, every Society would do therein according to their prejudicate Opinions, which they have been possessed with, formerly admitted. Whence it is therefore that we should take the Foundation of this distinction from none but from the Mouth of God Himself, speaking to Us in his Holy Word?

True it is, we find not any passage in the Holy Scriptures, that declares in formal Terms, which are the Fundamental Doctrines, to distinguish them from Others. But the Nature of the thing tells us, we may establish this distinction, by the very Word of God. For if all Christians receive as unquestionable Truths, all that which has been revealed to Us in the Word of God: If they all acknowledg that it would be an unpardonable Crime, but to call in Doubt any of these Sacred Oracles: (seeing it would be to suspect Him of Falshood who is Truth it self.) They must by consequence own, that whatsoever is clearly proposed to Us in the Word of God, and is also received by a

General Consent, is a Fundamental Point of Christianity. They must acquiesce in this Doctrine, as being immediately issued out from God, or else utterly renounce Christianity.

Whereas if there be Doctrines which have not been so clearly revealed to us, they give occasion to the Doctors, to interpose their Judgment, and give place to different Senses. We have likewise the Liberty of examining these divers Opinions. We may compare them together, to retain that which we shall judge most conformable to the Analogy of Faith. We may search out that which shall agree best with the Fundamental Points, which gives most Consolation to the Soul, and affords the greatest Motives to Piety. But we must not put these last Truths in the same Rank with the first, nor must we oblige Christians to acquiesce there, in the same Degree of Faith. As to the first, we should receive them as so many Oracles delivered from the Mouth of God, without any mixture of Humane Infirmity; whereas the second, which have passed through the Discourses of Men, may have been altered by the weakness of their Judgment. They may be tainted with the Defects and Imperfections of Humane Wit. And these are those Truths, or rather those Doctrines, which I do not allow to be Fundamental. Otherwise we should give to Man, and to Reason, an Authority, which appertains to none, but God alone, and his Word.

And to the End we may clear this matter by Examples which may make it both known and understood by every one; It is certain that these are Fundamental Doctrines in Christianity; viz. *That there is One God: That he hath sent his only Son into the World; That whosoever believe in Him, may have Eternal Life; That Jesus Christ died for our Sins, and arose again for our Justification; That He shall come in his Glory, to judge both the quick and the dead*; and such other Truths as all Christians admit of, as being most distinctly and plainly taught us in the Holy Scriptures.

But as for those Doctrines, which determine the Order of the Eternal Decrees of God; that tell us punctually what is the Object of Predestination; that Expound how the two Natures are united, in the Person of *Jesus Christ*; that comprehend and fathom the Mystery of the Trinity; that pretend to discover the Means, by which the *Holy Ghost* operates in the Hearts of the Faithful,

Faithful, and other things of the like Nature: I maintain, that although the Learned Men ſhould ſay never ſo many Excellent things concerning theſe Matters, and what they ſay might be approved, (as being judged reaſonable) they muſt not nevertheleſs be made to paſs, as of equal Authority with the Truths which are clearly revealed to us in God's Word. They ought indeed to be received, but in ſuch Manner, as that we ſhould be all ready to quit, and renounce them, in caſe any one ſhould make us ſee ſome Errour therein; Otherwiſe it is but to make way for Diviſion: Since every Doctor will make his particular Opinions to paſs for ſo many Fundamental Truths; and will reject all others, as Errours which utterly overthrow Salvation.

The Adverſe Parties will not be leſs Zealous in maintaining their contrary Opinions; which will be followed by a lamentable Separation and Diviſion. Here it is that we ſhould value the Precept of Saint *Paul*, 1 *Theſ.* 5. *Prove all things, and hold faſt that which is Good.* Here it is alſo, that the ſaying of the ſame Apoſtle might take place, 1 *Cor.* 3. *That there is but one ſole Foundation of Chriſtian Religion, which is Jeſus Chriſt; That Man might build upon it Gold, Silver, precious Stones, Wood, Hay, or Stubble; but that every Mans Work ſhall be made manifeſt; for it ſhall be tryed by Fire, which will conſume the evil Works, although the Workers may be preſerved.*

Let us in the next place hear what the Excellent Author of that Treatiſe of the Imitation of Chriſt ſays, *What will it avail thee, though thou canſt diſpute concerning the depth of the Myſtery of the Trinity; if, in the mean time, thou ſhalt be deſtitute of the Grace of Humility, which may make thee acceptable to the Trinity? The profound Diſcourſes of Divines make not a Man more Holy, and more Juſt. I had rather feel the true effects of Repentance, than know how to give a Diffinition of it.*

This Diſtinction being ſetled, the ready way will be open to us, by which we may attain to a perfect Re-union of all Chriſtians, in one Confeſſion of Faith. In the firſt place, I ſuppoſe that we muſt have a ſtrong Faith, having ſuppreſſed all particular Intereſts, which have no regard but to Temporal things; That we muſt for ſome time have caſt away all thoſe prejudicate Opinions, which are ſo many Bars and Hinderances of Agreement;

After

After this, I require that we ſhould adhere without varying, to the certain and infallible Rule, which is the Voice of God, ſpeaking to us in his Word: That according to this Word, we bear one with the other in the divers practice of its Eccleſiaſtical Diſcipline, and the different uſe of its Ceremonies. That we ſhould not look upon theſe outward things, but as accidentals to Religion, and which ought not to be eſtabliſhed, but according to the general Rule of Order and Decency.

I next require, that we all reſt in the Truth of the Sacred Hiſtories, leaving a Liberty to learned Men, of declaring their Opinions upon the Difficulties, which are therein met with, to follow without conſtraint, that Party which ſhall be judged moſt reaſonable; That we read not the Propheſies and Predictions contained in the Holy Scriptures, but with Humility, without determining any thing, as by Authority, upon their Sence, and the Times of their Accompliſhment; That we carefully diſtinguiſh between the Doctrines, ſo clearly eſtabliſhed in the Word of God, that all Chriſtians are obliged to receive them: And thoſe which have need, for their enlightning, of the Labour and Meditation of Men, to clear them; That we admit not of any other, than the firſt for Fundamentals, and unvariable: And that as to the others, we may diſpence with our receiving them, without prejudice to our Salvation, which ought not to depend, but on the firſt; Or, if we do receive them, it ſhould be but as Humane Opinions, which we judge moſt probable, which nevertheleſs we are ready to forſake, ſo ſoon as we ſhall know them not to be well grounded.

Laſtly, I undertake that all this may be done, without diſturbing the Peace and Unity, which we ſhould entertain with thoſe, who have different Opinions upon theſe Queſtions, on condition that they receive them not, but after the ſame manner which we receive ours; That is to ſay, as Humane Doctrines which may have their uſe, but which ſhould not engage Us, as thoſe which are iſſued from God, without any mixture of Humane Infirmity. After that, I believe there is no body, who does not judge that, being ſo well eſtabliſhed all Chriſtians generally ſhall live in a Perfect Unity, which is the Mark whereto we ſhould all aim.

And

And to justifie, that what I here lay down, is not without Foundation; that we may attain to Salvation in Christianity, without engaging in the Labyrinth of all these knotty Questions of the Schools; Suppose it should so happen, that some Christian might be driven by a Tempest into the Country, about the Straits of *Magellan*, or any other Parts, where the Inhabitants never heard speak of our Mysteries. Farther, I would not have this Christian know any but the first and most plain Rudiments of Christian Religion, contained in his CREED. I suppose him only to be perswaded of these Truths: That there is One God, who hath created the Heaven and the Earth: That he requires of us Perfect Holiness: That we have violated his Ordinances, which has rendred us unworthy of his Mercies: That nevertheless he has invited us still to Repentance, and to Salvation: That He has sent for this Purpose Him, whom He Himself calls His Son: That this Son dyed for our Sins: That He is risen again for our Justification: That He ascended into Heaven and there makes Intercession for us: And that if so be we are but fully perswaded of these Truths, and will carefully study Piety towards God, and Charity towards our Neighbours, we shall obtain Eternal Happiness. I suppose that this Man teaches these things to this Savage Nation, and that these People, who hitherto had been ignorant of all these Truths, are taken with their Beauty, and afterwards fully convinced of them, and will thereto conform their Lives: I ask if these People might not truly be called Christians, and whether or no they were not in the ready way to Salvation? For my part, I cannot make any difficulty to believe it, and passing farther on, I shall say, that I should esteem them happier, if they continued in these Principles, than if we should come to over-charge them with all these Critical Questions, with which we are ordinarily entertained.

John Moquet, in the Third Book of his Travels, relates a History which confirms this Truth. A poor Christian Woman being a Slave in one of the Principal Families of *Morocco*, taught the Christian Religion to the Master of the House's Daughter; The Slave, without doubt, was not able to give her any, but the most General Principles, according to the capacity of a Person of that Sex, and of that Condition; Nevertheless this Noble Maid,

Maid, new born to the Faith, was so throughly convinced of these Christian Truths, that she quickly suffered Martyrdom for the defence of them, and that too with an Heroick Virtue. Therefore as I acknowledg but one sole way, which God offers to all Men, for their attaining Salvation: So I conclude, that all those who shall hold fast to these Principles, so plain, and so few in Number, and live agreeable to them, will undoubtedly obtain Salvation and Life.

CHAP. VII.

What Ways must be followed, to facilitate the Execution of this Design.

AS it is not enough for the Curing a Disease, to be informed of the Remedy which is proper for it, but we must also know its Use, to apply it to purpose, and with success: So it is not sufficient that we know what will be a Saving Means to Reunite all Christians in one Confession of Faith: but we must Examine how this Means must be applyed to produce its Effect; seeing great Difficulties and Obstacles may be found in the Practice, which thwart the Execution thereof.

There might be alledged the Remoteness of many, who are called by the Name of Christians, whom it would be almost impossible to bring together, for concurring to so happy a Work. There might be produc'd the great Diversity of Opinions, which are amongst them; The Interests of Princes and States; The Engagements of whole Nations; The Aversions and Animosities which are strengthened by Time. There might be also added the Temporal Advantages, which those who have any Ecclesiastical Charges will be hardly perswaded to part with, and as many other things, which may arise in the Spirit of every one. All these Considerations might make this Proposition pass for an Airy and Imaginary Project: At the best it might be said to be a fair Idea, but very difficult to put in Execution, which, like *Plato*'s Republick, is in the Rank of things, which are more to be Desired than Hoped for.

To

To which I may in the firſt place ſay, That if there ſhould be no other End propoſed herein, than this, of Labouring for the Glory of God, and the Peace of his Church, it might be hoped that he would ſecond with his Grace, ſo laudable a Deſign. It is to attend his Work, it is to eſtabliſh his Reign in the World, it is to build up his Houſe. What? will he refuſe the Succours of his Grace, to thoſe who ſhall have no other aim, but his proper Intereſts? Therefore when we ſhall meet with Difficulties, which we cannot Remedy upon the ſuddain, we ſhould not for that be diſcouraged, but expect from the goodneſs of God, the Succeſs of ſo Pious an Enterprize. It muſt not be thought ſtrange, if at preſent God has left Chriſtians as deſtitute of the Graces, which he ſhowered down in the firſt times of Chriſtianity. His Spirit is not to be found among Tempeſts, and amidſt Whirlwinds: How ſhould it be among Chriſtians, divided into ſo many Sects, and animated with the Spirit of Diviſion, which reigns by Paſſion and Violence? So ſoon as Charity is awakened, we ſhall then labour for the Common Peace: That Spirit which was communicated to the firſt Diſciples, who were met together with One Accord, in One Place, will Inſpire us in ſuch manner, that this great Deſign will go forwards beyond all our Hopes.

In the mean time, ſeeing that God does not forbid us the endeavouring to make his Glory ſhine, with this ſmall Stock of Prudence, which we have received from his Grace. I ſuppoſe we might happily proceed after this order in our Deſign.

It would be neceſſary, with all ſpeed to cauſe to be diſperſed, Writings of this Tenor, in divers Languages, and ſend them into all Places, where there ſhall be any Chriſtians, of what Profeſſion ſoever they be. This would ſerve to undeceive an infinite number of pre-poſſeſſed Spirits, and make them hope for the Succeſs of an Enterprize, which hitherto has been ſuppoſed impoſſible to finiſh. This would waken in divers places many Private Perſons, who would have an Inclination to Peace, and on whom God had poured his Grace, proper for contributing to ſo good an End. I am aſſured that they would be raviſhed to have ſo favourable an Occaſion of working for the common Good of Chriſtendom. They would certainly be aſtoniſhed at the Conſideration, that they ſhould have been ſo long time without ma-

king a Diſcovery of this Buſineſs, and without taking it by its true Meaſures. They would bleſs God for having opened ſo fair a Port, to enter into ſo great a Calm, after ſo many Tempeſts. They would ſuitably qualifie themſelves, for the attaining to ſo deſirable an End. They would labour with all their Induſtry, to bring thither thoſe of their Communion; and altogether would ſtrive to ſuſpend for a while their Judgments in particular Articles, until by common Conſent all That ſhould be regulated, which was requiſite to ſo happy a Deſign.

Beſides the writings which ſhould be employed to this end; Familiar Converſations, and particular Diſcourſes would much contribute thereunto. It is thus that we might Do, and that we ought mutually to lend our Aſſiſtance, for the clearing of theſe matters. We ought always to have in Proſpect, the Glory of God, and the Peace of his Church; and this ſhould be our principal Buſineſs. There is not any thing, which oftner puts a ſtop to the Execution of our greateſt Deſigns, than the want of frequent unmasking, and laying them open. For the well-ordering of them, this muſt be often attemped, and all the difficulties by little and little removed, which ſhall Occur therein.

We are all generally more Curious to entertain our ſelves in converſe about any other thing, rather than that which is moſt Neceſſary. The Subjects moſt ordinarily fallen upon, in thoſe Companies which are eſteemed to be the moſt regular, are full of Vanity, if not Sinful. Newes of what paſſes in the World; Affairs of State; Explication of ſome difficult paſſages of the ancient Authors; Some queſtions of the Mathematicks, or of Phyſicks, and things of this nature, are the ordinary Entertainment of theſe famous Companies, which we ſo much admire. If any one ſhould propoſe ſuch a Subject as this, which I treat of; either it is Coldly received, or paſſed over Lightly, to go to ſome other, which may give more pleaſant Reliſh to the Company, and be better accommodated to the humours of the Age. And yet what more worthy Subject is there of our Converſations, than that which regards the geveral Good of all Chriſtians? Let us bleſs the happy moment, wherein we have been brought to the Diſcovery of this Generous Deſign, and contribute

contribute our Endeavour towards its good ſucceſs; if we can let our ſelves be vanquiſhed by this Exhortation!

Moreover it would be convenient, that all Thoſe who have found themſelves perſwaded of the Truth and Advantage of this Propoſition, ſhould employ their greateſt Care in advancing the Execution of it. If in Traffick, Men expoſe themſelves to ſo many Perils, to tranſport their Commodities from one Country to another, in hopes of ſome ſmall profit; Shall we ſit ſtill without communicating the moſt precious Treaſure, and greateſt Advantage which can arrive to Society? It is not here to be feared, that the number of thoſe who ſhall be Sharers in this good, will diminiſh the Portion of any particular Perſon: On the contrary, the increaſe of this Number, will augment the Satisfaction and Joy of thoſe, who make a part thereof: As thoſe that follow Armes, rejoyce to ſee their Side grow ſtronger, and at the ſame time conceive thereat both Hopes and Joy. For, if we act in this Affair, but for the glory of God, the good of his Church, and our own Salvation, as we have even now aſſerted; the more true Believers we ſee Re-united together, to promote this end, the more Joy ſhall we have, and the more ſatisfaction.

But if private Perſons are obliged to contribute to ſo Glorious an Enterprize: I believe that thoſe who have any Employment in the Church, in whatſoever Society it be, ought to be aſſiſtant therein, by a particular Engagement. Their Profeſſion calls them to it, their Charge obliges them to it, and the Lights which they pretend to have above the Vulgar, ought only to guide them this way. They are as well reſponſible for the Souls of Others, as for their Own. They ſhould not propoſe any other Intereſts, than thoſe which are joyned to the Intereſts of their Maſter; and His Glory only ought to adorn theirs. If they uſe it otherwiſe, they are bad Servants, and Stewards of the Talents, which have been committed to them. But if they once ſtrive with Zeal, to promote this great Work; beſides their own Comfort, the Succeeſs of it will make them readier, and more aſſur'd. People have commonly their Eyes on them, to follow their Steps, and imitate their Examples; So that they draw after them whole Troops, Societies, Communities and

Sects, as it ſuffices Him to gain the Officers of an Army, who would make Himſelf Maſter of all the Souldiers.

But eſpecially, I make account, that thoſe who are able to give the greateſt Stroke on this Occaſion, are Princes, and all thoſe who have the Government of States, and Management of Publick Affairs. They can maintain with their Authority all theſe Reaſons, which ſhall be employed in this Noble Enterprize: And their Power will be very Efficacious, for making the Exhortations of others Valued. It is not, that I mean this Affair ſhould be plainly carried on by the Force and Authority of Men. The Underſtanding muſt herein be cleared, to gain over the Heart and the Affections, which is better done by Reaſoning, than Threatnings, and by the Force of Arguments, than by that of Arms.

But ſince there may be ſome particular Perſons ſo wedded to their old Opinions, that for their Worldly Intereſts, they would reject the Good, which would be procured for them: It would be fit to hinder theſe People, by a Superiour Authority, from croſſing ſo happy a Deſign. If for Example, ſome Clergy-men, of any Community whatſoever, could not reſolve to quit their Temporal Advantages, which are of more weight with them, than the Publick Intereſt: The Authority of Princes and Magiſtrates, would ſerve very well to reduce them to that which was Reaſon and Juſtice. There would alſo herein be this Advantage expected, from thoſe who have the Power in their Hands; namely, that by the Correſpondence and Alliance, which they have together, they might make this Good, Univerſal to all Chriſtians. They might likewiſe Joyn their Forces, for repreſſing the Boldneſs of Infidels, and all Enemies to the Name of Chriſtians, who would oppoſe themſelves to ſo Holy a Reſolution.

Laſtly, They might maintain againſt all others, thoſe Perſons who would enter into this Holy Communion: But foraſmuch as this is one of the moſt powerful Means to attain to this End, and which deſerves more Important Conſiderations, I reſerve it to a particular Treatiſe, if this firſt Work ſhall be favourably entertain'd.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Answers to the Objections, and Difficulties which may be formed against this Design.

THere can be no Advantage proposed, which meets not with its Difficulties; We cannot fetch Gold out of a Mine, but with much Trouble; The Earth is not made Fertile, but when it is Digged and Plowed with great Care; and the Success of the most Admirable Enterprizes is not obtained, but by surmounting with Industry, all the Obstacles which are met with, in the Execution of them. And yet this Trouble we have in attaining these most Excellent Goods, is that which contributes much to their Glory. It is a poor Common Vertue which finds no Resistance in its Operations; The praise of Heroick Vertue consists in the conquering of great Difficulties. So that this Project would be less admirable than it is, if it could be effected without Pain, and if the Execution thereof were easie. But what Objections may be made to this, and Difficulties met with herein; will be altogether such, as that we shall be easily able both to Answer the One, and Remedy the Other.

Some will presently be apt to say, That to attempt this, is in a manner to go about to hinder an Effect, which must necessarily happen. That it is, as if one should undertake to stop the Course of the Stars, and hinder the Revolution of the Seasons. That *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles have foretold there should be Heresies, Dissentions, and Schisms in the Christian Church. That this is permitted by the Providence of God, to make evident the Zeal and Constancy of his Faithful Servants: Insomuch that it would be to strive against the Eternal Decrees, and Rules appointed in the Counsel of God, to endeavour to prevent the Division or Dissention among Christians.

But for satisfying this Objection, besides what has been said upon this Point, at the beginning of this Treatise. There is but one thing to consider, which is, that this Prediction is not only grounded upon a Decree of God, for the ordering of things which

which ſhould happen in his Church; but upon an effect of the evil diſpoſition of the Spirits of Men, which is cauſe of the Diſ-union: And that hinders us not from labouring to Remedy this Cauſe, and put a ſtop to theſe deplorable Effects. So that what *Jeſus Chriſt* has foretold us of the Fire which he was come to kindle in the Earth, by the Preaching of his Goſpel, hinders not his Servants from running, with great affection, to Extinguiſh it, and to ſtay the great Burning which this Flame might cauſe.

Moreover, if it were ſo, that this Evil falls out, becauſe it has been foretold; Yet it does not import thus much, that it ſhould abide continually. Is it not enough that it has taken place for ſo many Ages? Is it not time to ſtop its Courſe and ſee an end of it? So will the Propheſie have had its accompliſhment in our Fathers days, and we ſhall, in ours, enjoy the Calm after all theſe Tempeſts. Let us add hereunto, that this very Word, which foretells us theſe Diviſions, makes us alſo hope for an eſtate of Peace and Quiet in the Church. It makes times of Refreſhment and Eaſe to ſucceed all theſe great Diſturbances, and aſſures us that there ſhall be ſuch a firm Peace in the Earth, that we ſhall ſee thoſe Creatures, which are the greateſt Enemies one to the other, that is to ſay, thoſe Spirits, wherein is the moſt Contrariety, dwell and unite together. Who knows but that we may live to enjoy thoſe Happy Times? Who knows but in our days we may ſee this general Peace among all Chriſtians? And I durſt promiſe, that by the Aſſiſtance and Bounty of God, this ſhall come to paſs, if our Sins do not put a hinderance to it, and our particular Intereſts more ſway us, than the general good of Chriſtendom.

It muſt be ſaid in the ſecond place, that this Deſign of bringing all Chriſtians to acknowledg, but ſo ſmall a Number of Heads in Chriſtian Religion, approved by every one, is directly oppoſite to the Apoſtles Doctrine, and to the Practice of the Primitive Chriſtians. Thoſe who diſpute ſo ſtrongly againſt the Errours which aroſe in their times; Thoſe who condemned with ſo much Indignation all who did not conform to the Holy Doctrine, which they received from the Lord; Is there any likelihood that they would have harkened to theſe Propoſitions of bearing one with another, and a charitable condeſcending in theſe Points of Religion? Would St *Paul* have liſtened to ſuch accommodation, who writ

writ with so much sharpness against the *Galatians*, who had suffered themselves to be seduced by certain False Teachers? Would St *John*, who refused to have any converse with Hereticks, have approved of this Overture?

To which I Answer, that what perswaded these Holy Men, to act on this manner, was, that they regarded not so much the Diversity of Opinions, which they disapproved, as the evil Disposition of those who went about to establish those ill Opinions. They well saw, that what these Persons were about to contrive, was not out of a Spirit of Simplicity and Humility: They observ'd nothing in all their Conduct, but particular Interests of Worldly Honour, Profit, Authority and Rule, which all their endeavours carried them to. These now are Motives, against which we can never make too much Zeal and Indignation appear.

But we see they dealt clearly otherwise with such poor People as had been seduced by these Crafty Wits, than they did with these Incendiaries, these Spirits of Lying. They treated Those with Mildness, but These they condemned with Severity: They bore with the First, and had Charity for them, but they had a Holy and Just Anger for the Second: They allowed some Liberty to the Former, but granted Nothing to the Latter.

We see also how St *Paul*, that Zealous Servant of God, is not afraid in the very Question of the Resurrection of our Bodies, (so important in Religion) of setting a great Value on this Holy and Charitable Bearing one with another. To this might be added, that these Holy Men have been immediately inspired by the Spirit of God, to acknowledg and make known to others these Heavenly Truths. And this being so, they might condemn with Boldness, and with knowledg of the Cause, those who reject the Truth, which appeared to them in the open Day; Whereas at present, we not having these Lights, and this Supernatural and Miraculous Assistance, are obliged to keep our selves strictly to the express terms of the Doctrine contained in the Holy Scriptures.

Moreover, it might be Objected, that this Design is of Dangerous Consequence: That it is to give to every one a Liberty of having what Opinion he pleases; and also in matters of Importance, such as have hitherto divided Mens Spirits: That it is

to give an occaſion of falling inſenſibly into an Indifferency for Religion, and to favour, in ſome ſort, the Contempt of all.

Now, as this is a preſſing Objection, and able to drive from this Deſign all good Souls, if it were well founded; I am confident that whoſoever ſhall have well examined the Foundations which I have laid down, will find there is nothing further from my purpoſe, than this Conſequence, which they would draw from it. This would be to make Darkneſs ariſe from Light, and as the Scripture ſays, to draw Filthineſs from that which is Pure, to imagine ſuch effects ſhould proceed from a Cauſe ſo Holy and Innocent. Can that which only tends to the Re-uniting of Chriſtians in the ſame Opinions, hurry them into Impiety and Irreligion? Will that which brings us back to the moſt plain, and moſt naked Doctrine of the Goſpel, cauſe an indifferency for Religion to ſpring from it? What, then, would this be living without Religion, to be fully perſwaded, that there is a God, who hath created Heaven and Earth; who hath made Mankind; who Puniſheth the Wicked, and Cheriſheth the Good? Is it to be without Religion, to believe firmly that we have no other Means of getting out of the Miſery, wherein our Sins have caſt us, but by embracing the Promiſes which God hath made us, in his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*? Is it to be Indifferent in matters of Religion, to hold for certain, that there is no way to obtain Life and Eternal Happineſs, but by that of Holineſs and good Works? Is it to be Impious, wholly to Conſecrate our ſelves to the Service of God, according to the Rules which he hath preſcribed us in his Word, under the colour, that there are but few Rules embraced; Yet however embraced, with an entire perſwaſion of their Truth.

I maintain, on the contrary, that all theſe Defects of Piety, and all theſe Inclinations to Irreligion, do not proceed from any other cauſe than this, that Religion has been over-charged with too many curious and ſtrange Queſtions. I hold that it is this Great Number of Ceremonies, Scrupulous Obſervations of the Externals of Religion, and ſuch other Trifles, which have divided the Minds of Men, and alienated the moſt tender Affections. For thoſe who are not penetrating enough to ſearch into, and reſolve all the Difficulties which are met with in theſe kind of Matters,

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ſuffer themſelves to fall into an Indifferency. They never looked upon Religion, but as a Subject whereon the moſt ſubtil and active Wits ſet themſelves a work. Whereas if we did but once reduce Chriſtian Religion to the natural Simplicity of its Rules, it would then diſcover all its Graces and Beauty, and would be lov'd by us all, becauſe it would have nothing in it, but what was lovely to our Eye.

Laſtly, There might be produced other Difficulties, which might occur in the proſecution of this grand Deſign. Some will ſay, that if it were a Feaſible Thing, it would have long ago come into the Heads of ſome others, who would have tryed it; And if they did diſcover it, without making ſome Attempt in it, it was becauſe they knew the Execution of it to be impoſſible. That there are too many different Genius's to overcome, too many different Intereſts to reconcile, too many Jealouſies and Diſtruſts to ſurmount: That after we ſhall have begun to remedy the precedent Evils, there will ariſe from this Deſign other New Subjects of Contention and Diſpute, and by conſequence of Diviſion. But perchance no Body to this preſent has ever conſidered this Affair, as I do: It may be, if they have made the ſame Diſcovery, they have wanted Application of Spirit to form the Deſign of it, and clear the Difficulties. For my part, I do not think the Difficulties unconquerable: And I ſay once more, that would we engage in it with Zeal, and Religious Motives, the Affair would ſucceed happily, to the great good of all Chriſtendom. Theſe Spirits would let themſelves be vanquiſhed by the Motions of Piety and Charity. All theſe particular Intereſts would give place to that of the Glory of our Soveraign. All theſe Jealouſies and Diſtruſts would be ſmothered by an ardent Zeal for the Service of God. And why ſhall I looſe the hopes of ſucceeding in this generous Deſign?

Did we not ſee, that at the Diſputation at *Poiſſy*, in the Year 1561. The *Roman Catholicks* and *Proteſtants* had almoſt agreed together about the Terms, wherein the Article of the Communion ſhould be expreſſed? Yet that is eſteemed the greateſt Difference amongſt them. And had it not been for certain Doctors, who indeed, for their particular Intereſts broke of this Acoommodation, it would then have been ſeen, that theſe two Grand Parties would have been reconciled together.

Do we not know that at the Conferrence held at *Marpurg* in *Germany*, in the Year 1529. between *Luther* and *Zuinglius*, they fell into Agreement about certain Expreſſions, almoſt in all the Points of Religion, and it was concluded, that as to thoſe whereon they could not likewiſe Agree, they ſhould Bear charitably one with another, and that That ſhould not hinder the Re-union which was to be made. And yet I know that afterwards it was croſſed by the ill Diſpoſitions of Bad Spirits.

But when all theſe particular Intereſts, and prejudicate Opinions, ſhall be removed, which have at other times croſſed all theſe fair Deſigns, what ſhall hinder us from meeting in that Point and true Center, now at laſt, wherein all Chriſtians may be Re-united? Who ſhall hinder us in thoſe things, wherein it may be, we cannot eaſily be enlightened from uſing a Charitable and Brotherly bearing one with another? And that ſo we may work together as well United Brethren, for the Glory of the Common Father of this great Chriſtian Family, whoſe Head, the Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, cannot be divided? The greateſt Rub is in the firſt Steps, which muſt be made towards this Re-union, but this is no unconquerable Difficulty.

We read in the Relations of Voyages made to the Eaſtern Countries, that in *Turky*, *Perſia*, *&c.* All the Chriſtians which are there met with, of whatſoever Sect they be, live together in a perfect Unity, and give mutually all poſſible Marks of a ſincere Friendſhip.

Olearius obſerves, that in *Perſia* they make no difficulty of joyning together in their Devotions. And *Peter de la Valle*, a *Roman* Gentleman, relates, (*Tom.* 2. *Ep.* 3.) that when an *Engliſh* Ambaſſadour arrived at *Hiſpahan*, a Conſultation was held, whether or no the *Roman* Catholicks, the *Spaniards*, and *Italians*, which were there, ſhould go to Viſit Him, and that by Joynt conſent they were of Opinion, that it was the common Intereſt, to make it appear to that *Mahometan* Prince, notwithſtanding ſome difference that there was amongſt them in certain Points of Religion, yet that they lived together in a perfect Correſpondence. And he adds a very conſiderable Inſtance, *Viz.* That in *Conſtantinople*, all the Chriſtians, both Catholiques and Heretiques (as his phraſe is) dwell together in ſo excellent and perfect an

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Unity, that once when he lived there, I know not upon what occasion, the Jesuits having fallen into some great trouble; The Ambassadours of *England* and *Holland*; who otherwise are their mortal Enemies, (as he says) were the first, who spake in their Favour, and made their Business be dispatched, with all the good Success which they could desire.

What then hinders Us here in *Europe*, in the Midst of Christianity, that we cannot do that by a Motive of Charity, which they in the *Levant* do by the Principle of the Interest of Trade, and Civil Affairs; and that, we drawing again one towards another, should not agree at last in the Fundamental Points, which may Unite Us all together?

And although this Design should not be so readily brought to Perfection, Meditation would be very Advantagious, and very Conducing to it. Particular Persons, who shall have tasted of it, would draw much Satisfaction from it; They would be disabused, as to many of their pre-conceived Opinions; They would find themselves discharged of a Heavy Yoke; They would unmask Christian Religion, and discover its Beauteousest Face, as being most Pure, and most Plain. They would love it, and Dwell together in its Profession, with singular Comfort.

I shall also add this same, that if the Proposition should not Succeed so happily, for all Christians in general, it might take Effect in many particular States of *Europe*. I mean amongst those Christians, where there are Diversities of Opinions and Professions. Could we not, at least in these Places labour herein, for some good Accommodation? And would not the Fruit which grows thence, be capable of inviting Others to take share in it?

THE CONCLUSION.

The Profits and Advantages, which might be hoped for from this Design.

HE muſt be very dim-ſighted, who cannot plainly ſee the Signal Advantages, which may be expected from ſo Excellent a Deſign. It would be an admirable Means for Advancing the Glory of God, to eſtabliſh his Doctrine in the Purity and Simplicity which is natural to it. Men have been deſirous to ſupply by their Prudence, the Defects which they thought they had obſerved, in the Conduct of Providence. They thought that God had not in his Word explained Himſelf, neither Clear enough, nor Amply enough, to be underſtood, without Aſſiſtance. Thence proceeded all theſe Expoſitions, Paraphraſes, Commentaries, Queſtions and Diſputes, which have oppreſt, and almoſt choaked the moſt Excellent, and moſt Holy Doctrine, that ever appeared in the World. If therefore we can but once rid her of this Burthen, ſhe will appear in all her Luſter again, and eſtabliſh in its Ancient Purity the Service of Him, who is manifeſted by Her.

Under the Old Covenant, God rejected the Worſhip, which the moſt Superſtitious amongſt the Jews offered him; and that becauſe they had modell'd it according to their Fancies, and had rather endeavoured the obſervance of theſe Outward things, than the Solidity and Eſſence of true Piety. God refuſes his Graces to thoſe, who have no mind to receive them, meerly Simple and Pure as they are: To mix them with Ours, is abſolutely to ſpoil them.

And now ſeeing we are ſo Unhappy at this preſent, as not to enjoy the Communication of the Graces of Heaven, nor that bleſ-

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ſed Commerce which the firſt Chriſtians had with God, who doubts but that this muſt needs come from hence, that we have quitted their Simple and Innocent Carriage in Divine Service? We have undertaken to ſerve Him after our Manner, and we have endeavoured to know Him, only by ſuch Ideas, which our Capricious Fancies have faſhion'd of Him; This has properly been the Cloud, which has intercepted our Sight of Him; This, certainly, has been the Sin, which being the moſt Capital of all, has made Him conceal Himſelf from us, and the Provocation which has obliged his Juſtice to chaſtize, by the Deprivement of his Graces, thoſe who have neglected the Simplicity of his Doctrine. We muſt therefore re-enter into that firſt State of Simplicity, Humility, and Charity, to recover that which we have loſt, that is to ſay, God and his Graces: and this is what we ſhould hope for, from the Execution of this Deſign.

The ſecoud Advantage which we may expect, is, that we ſhould find it much eaſier to extirpate Vice, and to procure the Reformation of Manners in Society. We are driven to a neceſſity of certain Diſputes, and ſtrange Controverſies, whilſt we ſhould be rooting out the Paſſions, which choak the Fruit of the Doctrine of the Goſpel. We make Sallies out upon the Enemy, whilſt Sedition moleſts us within. Let us caſt away theſe unprofitable Queſtions: We have enough to do, to make Anſwer to the Reproaches of our own Conſciences. We ſhall never think of Reforming our Manners, whilſt we ſpend the chiefeſt of our time, in maintaining theſe impertinent Diſcourſes. We ſhall not be able to defend our ſelves from ill Examples, If we employ our Arms in vindicating of indifferent Opinions, which cannot ſo long be debated *Pro* and *Con*, without Prejudice to Salvation; eſpecially ſince this Diverſity of Opinions deſtroys, as it hath been proved, both Charity, which is the Foundation of Chriſtian Vertues, and Humility, which is the Soul of them. The Fire of this Diviſion muſt firſt be extinguiſhed, before we can proceed, with Succeſs, towards the Correction of Manners and Reformation of Life. Therefore it is this, that all good Chriſtian Souls do Sigh after.

We might have great reaſon to hope that the State would have alſo a conſiderable Advantage by this Deſign. People would become more Tractable, and ſubmit with more willingneſs to the Orders

Orders of their Governours, when they ſhould ſee themſelves United with them in the ſame Profeſſion. It hath been always obſerved, that Mens affections have never been ſtraightly linked together, where their Minds have been divided by different Opinions: Moreover, all thoſe Subtilties which we cauſe to ariſe about Religion, do ordinarily make Peoples Spirits Inquiſitive, Proud, ſtanding upon Punctilio's, Obſtinate, and by conſequence, more difficult to be brought to Reaſon and their Obedience. Every particular Man pretends to have a Right of taking Cognizance of thoſe Controverſal Matters, to interpoſe his Judgment therein, and then with great Vehemency to defend them. After this, in Affairs of State they will take the ſame Liberty, which they gave themſelves in thoſe of Religion. They believe, that if it be permitted them to Controle the Opinions of their Governours in the Church, where the Service of God is; It ſhould likewiſe be free for them to Examine the Conduct of thoſe who are ſet over them in State. Thus the Re-union which I propoſe, will be a Powerful Means to hold every one in his Duty.

All Princes of Chriſtendom would draw conſiderable Advantages from this Deſign, for beſides the Obedience of their Subjects, of which I have now been ſpeaking, they might ſtrictly Unite themſelves together; Since theſe Jealouſies, theſe Diſtruſts, and theſe Diviſions, which ordinarily ariſe from Diverſity of Profeſſions, comming abſolutely to ceaſe, all theſe Different Intereſts which ſeparate them, would Unite in One, and the Fruit would be Common to them All. This Intereſt would carry them on joyntly to oppoſe themſelves to the Enemies of the Name of Chriſtian, and take over them all Advantage, which Reaſon and Juſtice could allow.

Is it not a Strange thing, that ſince the *Roman* Catholicks, the Proteſtants, and the *Greeks* have ſo Rent and Torn each other; we ſee that the *Mahometans* have made ſo great a Progreſs amongſt them, by reaſon of their Diviſions? If, when the *Turks* came to fix themſelves in *Hungary*, and then afterwards Attacqued the State of the *Venetians*, all Chriſtendom with one Accord had oppoſed themſelves to their Deſigns; Had they reaped thoſe Advantages, which they had not long ſince obtained over thoſe two States? Is it not a very Aſtoniſhing, not to ſay a Shameful, thing, that

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that some Neighbouring Countries to those dreadful Enemies of all Christians, have formerly thought themselves obliged to treat with them, and that also upon disadvantagious Terms, meerly out of the Distrusts and Jealousies which they have had of other Christians? They shamefully make Peace with the *Turks*, to turn their Arms against the Christians; esteeming it to be running to that which is the most pressing Necessity: Thus the Common Enemy advanced, and got much Ground amongst us, by reason of our Divisions. To stop therefore this Evil, and utterly to expel them from amongst us, I see no other more Effectual Remedy, than to hasten this Agreement of Opinions, which (without doubt) will be followed by that of Affections.

The Common People will find herein this Satisfaction, that they shall no more be troubled in Religion, with so great a Number of Questions, and Diversity of Opinions, proposed to them as Necessary to Salvation. Hereby will be banished from hence all those Scruples of Conscience, those Troubles, those Alarms and those Distrusts, so directly opposite to the *Genius* of Christian Religion, and to the Peace which the Eternal Son of God has procured for us. Thus the Simple Artificers, the Labourers, and those who are most Unlearned and Ignorant would be guided in the way of Salvation, and be led to the Enjoyment of Eternal Blessedness. The Doctors, by this Means, would not have so great Advantage over the People, in the Knowledge and Practice of Things Necessary to Salvation.

It might be said, that hitherto there have been, as it were, two different Religions, in one and the same Religion: The first is of the Learned and Scholars, the other that of the Common People, Women and Children: Yet *Jesus Christ* never had a Double Auditory, He never instructed the Pharisees and the Doctors of the Law otherwise than the Common People: And when He chose Successors to supply His Room, they were Poor Fishermen, who had more concern in the Instructing and saving of such as were like them in Condition, than boasting their Subtilty in the Disputes of the Schools, and Confounding such as thought to have the Advantage over others in Arguing.

I am also perswaded, that those particularly, who are employed in Ecclesiastical Charges, and called to Teach others, will here find

find great Advantage: They will no more tread upon thoſe Thorns which heretofore they met with, in all thoſe Critical and Unprofitable Queſtions: They will have no more thoſe Diſtruſts and Alarms which they gave themſelves, doubting if they were not in a wrong Way, and if they miſled not others: They will not Fear the Encountring a Doctrine which is Truer than that they Profeſs. Let them ſay what they will, this thought oftentimes makes their Hearts ake, who, amongſt them, have tender Conſciences. Therefore ſeeing themſelves delivered from all thoſe Unquietneſſes, they would acquit themſelves of their Charge with much more Joy. They would labour with Pleaſure for the Advancement of the Glory of God. They would bend all their Thoughts to ſtir up every one to a Good Life, and they themſelves would be Examples to others, of Vertue, Piety and Charity.

'Tis often ſeen, that amidſt the Contentions which the Doctors raiſe about ſome Niceties of Doctrinal Points, there is little or no Zeal for the Glory of God. They grow ſo Paſſionate for the getting of ſome Advantage in a Diſpute, until, at laſt, they let themſelves be maſtered and vanquiſhed by their own Paſſions. Many times ſtrange Controverſies make us forget that Buſineſs that we ſhould have with our ſelves; and ſome ſtudy more how to Speak well, and Diſpute well, than how to Live well.

Laſtly, who does not ſee, that if we bring this Deſign about, it will prove an excellent Means to draw to the Goſpel many People, but who look not upon it now with Averſion & Contempt. This Simplicity, this Beauty, and this Facility which is obſerved in Chriſtian Religion, together with the perfect Unity of the Profeſſors thereof, will be a Powerful Loadſtone to Attract to it, all Thoſe, who hitherto have rejected it: When they ſhall ſee that this Holy Religion is not made to conſiſt meerly in Ceremonies, that is to ſay, in outward Grimaces, which moſt commonly Terrifie and keep off thoſe that are well inclined towards it, rather than invite them to follow it: When they ſhall never more hear talk of all thoſe Critical and Troubleſome Queſtions, which are riſen up in Chriſtianity: When they ſhall obſerve no more particular Intereſts predominant in the Spirit of Chriſtians: When they ſhall be convinced, that there is nothing but the Love of God, Charity towards our Neighbour, and the deſire of Living

ving well, which inſpires them: Laſtly, when they ſhall ſee in the Faces of theſe Chriſtians the Marks of true Peace and Comfort, which the Chriſtians poſſeſſes within: They muſt have deprived themſelves of all Sence of Vertue, they muſt have extinguiſhed utterly all Sparks of Reaſon, and turn ſworn Enemies of their own Good, if they deſire not to enter into a Society which hath all theſe Advantages.

I doubt not alſo but thoſe Bleſſed Spirits who continually ſtand before the Throne of God, will be concerned in the Advantages of this Holy Union; for if they ſo much intereſt themſelves in the Converſion of a poor Sinner, that they Rejoyce and Sing aloud in the Quire of Glory, will they not make a Solemn Feſtival in Heaven for the Re-uniting of all Chriſtians upon Earth? I am alſo perſwaded, that God, ſeeing we all bend our Courſe toward Him, with the ſame Heart, and the ſame Affections, will certainly come to Meet and Receive us; He will embrace us in His Mercies, and ſpeak to us in the Motions of His Loving Kindneſs, eſpecially if *we ſay* to Him with the Author of that Treatiſe of the Imitation of Chriſt, *Lib.* 1. *Cap.* 13. *I am weary with Hearing and Reading ſo many Things. It is in thee alone, O my God, that all is included which I deſire or wiſh for. Let all Doctors hold their Peace, let all Creatures keep Silence in Thy Preſence, and be Thou pleaſed alone to ſpeak to me.*

I wiſh with all my Heart, that all theſe Conſiderations may make ſuch an Impreſſion upon the Spirits of all thoſe who ſhall read this Writing, that every one may afterwards Contribute, according to his Power, to the Advancement of this Great Work; and that God would favour, in ſuch Manner, our Attempts with his Grace, that we might ſuddenly ſee a Happy Succeſs therein, to His Glory, and the Good of all Chriſtians.

And becauſe my Voice is too weak to awaken them, and draw them out of the Eſtate where I behold them now; I wiſh they would hear that of the great Apoſtle of the Gentiles, whoſe Voice and Stile all Chriſtians know. He calls to them thus, in *Epheſ.* 4. *Be ye kind one to another in Love, endeavoring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace. There is but One Body and One Spirit, even as you are called to One Hope of your Vocation: There is but One Lord, One Faith, One Baptiſm, One God and Father of All, who is*

over All, and through All, and in you All. This Great Servant of God likewiſe beſeeches them all, with Words capable to work upon the Hardeſt Hearts, ſpeaking to the *Philippians*, Chap. 2. *If* ſays he, *there be any Conſolation in Chriſt, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any Bowels of Mercy, if any Compaſſion; make my Joy compleat, that ye be of the ſame Opinion, having the ſame Charity, being of the ſame Courage, and acquieſcing in the ſame Thing. Neither let any thing be done amongſt you with Strife, or Vain Glory: But rather eſteeming one the other in Humility of Spirit more Excellent than himſelf, not every one regarding his Own particular intereſt, but that alſo which appertains to Others. Let there be therefore One Mind in you, like that which was alſo in Jeſus Chriſt:* To whom, with the Father, be Glory for Ever and Ever, *Amen.*

ERRATA.

In the Tranſlator to the Reader, *page* 5. *line* 5. *for* nimis, *read* minus. *p.* 7. *l.* 8. *f.* O, *read* Or.

In the Latin Verſes, *line* 6. *for* impedens, *r.* impendens. *l.* 12. *f.* itaquo, *r.* itaque.

In the Treatiſe it ſelf, *page* 5. *line* 11. *for* fermented, *read* fomented. *p.* 7. *l.* 11. *f.* ſow, *r.* clear. *ibid l.* 13. *f.* even, *r.* ever. *p.* 10. *l.* 2. *f.* wherefore, *r.* whereof. *p.* 16. *r.* Effect of this Diviſion. *p.* 24, *There ſhould be no break at* of Souls; Who does. *p.* 26. *l.* 12. *f.* raw, *r.* raſh. *p.* 36. *l.* 15. *r.* Arminum. *p.* 58. *l.* 33. *f.* their *r.* there. *p.* 84. *l.* 25. *r.* People, Who look not upon it now but with. Beſides ſome other Litteral Errors not material.

FINIS.